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SANTAL MOVEMENT

Introduction

The first faint stirrings of Indian nationalism may be found much before the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. First, there was "a religious expression of the rising national awakening" and then secular political organisations were set up. On the third level, there were tribal revolts, which formed a part of peasant nationalism. Like all sub-nationalism they were a product of social disorganisation.

Three years before the English East India Company made a permanent settlement of land revenue in Bengal (1793) and gave a new set of regulations, creating a new class of landlords, and substituted customs by contract, the tribes men called the Santals (Santhals) were induced to migrate to the southern parts of the district of Birbhum in Bengal to clear the jungle and drive out the wild beasts. But here they were annoyed by the treatment of the local zamindars and many moved to the neighbouring areas later called the Santal Parganas (Santhalia).

Unfortunately in the Santhalia, the average British officers like James Sutherland, John Petty Ward or James Pontent were levellers, indifferent to what the Santals thought. Unlike Augustus Cleveland, who had earlier respected the sentiments of the Paharias, another tribe living in the Rajmahal hills in the same area, these officers neglected the Santals, leaving them in the hands of the rapacious non-tribal police *darogas* and *amlas* (subordinate officers) and peons as well as at the mercy of cruel traders and usurers. The money economy, a complex legal system, and the new administrative system each one was for the Santals beyond comprehension.

Not only did the Santals, who cleared the jungles and improved the land, find themselves neglected, they were also peeved at the preferential treatment being given to the Paharias, who had special police rules and were exempted from the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. Harassed from all sides, the Santals were compelled to raise the banner of revolt.

After all, the Santals found no other method of reviving their good old world, where there was no exploitation. But the revolt of 1856 was

ruthlessly crushed by the British. During the revolt of 1857 the Santals of the Santal Parganas silently watched the developments, but their breathren in the Hazaribagh district of Chota Nagpur, who had raised the banner of revolt in 1855-56, once again fought the British administration. In both these revolts, there was a Rob Roy syndrome, but the Santal *hool* (1855) was basically a messianic movement.

Soon the Santals realised the futility of armed revolt against the organised power of the British *raj* and in 1871 they started a non-violent struggle, the Kherwar Movement, a reformist revitalisation movement, boycotting the census operation of 1872 and the survey and settlement operations. This movement continued even into the twentieth century and became a part of the integrated national movement. It was partly religious and party political in nature.

Land and People

According to L.O. Skrefsrud, a Christian missionary, long residence at a place named Saont (Silda in the Midnapur district of Bengal) gave the name Santal (Sonthal or Saontar). Before the Santals were associated with Saont they were known as the Kherwar (Kharwar), the root of which (*Kher*) is a variant of *hor* (man), a name which the Santals used among themselves. In a letter to the *Statesman* of Calcutta (8 November 1880) Skrefsrud said that the word 'Kher' or 'Khair' may be traced in the names of many places and tribal names all over India : Khairagrah with an old Santal fort ; the Kharias of Singhbhum, the Kherias of Nagpur, the Kurmis of Manbhum, the Korwas of Chota Nagpur and the Korkos of the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh).

According to W.B. Oldham's report of 24 November 1880, the name 'Santal' was used along with the title 'Manjhi'. This title, the Sanskrit equivalent of which is 'Samant', has been curtailed to 'Saont'. The title 'manjhi' is used by the Sadgop (milkmen), Mallah (fishermen), Kaibarta (Kyot) and some others in Bihar and Bengal. Oldham thought that the name 'manjhi' might be connected with 'mandal', and 'mandalji' might have become 'manjhi'.

Anthropoloigsts like H.H. Risley, S.T. Dalton and others place the Santals linguistically in the Kolarian group. But unlike the other Kolarians, the Mundas and the Hos of Singhbhum, the Santals are known to be habitual migrants, not sticking to one particular place. In the words of Carstairs, they spread like the bees, sending their swarms to create a new village.

There is an interesting legend about the origins of the Santals narrated by one Santal chief, Bagh Rai Parganait. of a Santal settlement on the banks of the river Damodar in Bengal. A wild goose landed at a place called Ahiri Pipri and laid two eggs from which a male and a female, the progenitors of the Santal tribe, emerged. They multiplied at

Har Duti from where they migrated to Khairagarh, eventually settling in Chai Champa in the Hazaribagh district of Chota Nagpur in South Bihar.

Following a clash with the Birhors and a threat from a tyrant Madhu Singh the Santals migrated to the other parts of Chota Nagpur where a big mountain (Morang Buru) saved them from the Birhor tribe and Madhu Singh who were trying to overtake them. Hence they worship Morang Buru.

Eventually the Santals moved through Jhalda and Patkum *parganas* of Chota Nagpur and came to Saont, the raja of which place demanded the hands of a Santal maiden. When threatened by him they moved to Manbhum. The Santals still remember with nostalgia the area between the rivers Damodar and Kasai and the village Saont and Handwai.

It was in the late eighteenth century that the Santals started immigrating to the skirts (*daman*) of the Rajmahal hills, formerly called Jungleterry (*tarai*), which was till then inhabited by the Paharias (Maler and Sauria). The exodus continued in the early nineteenth century, with the encouragement of the officers of the English East India Company. The first reference to these immigrants can be found in Sutherland's reports of 1819.

Since the Santals were great foresters, the redouhtable Bhuinyas, the powerful Khetauri rajas and some Hindu and Muslim zhmindars in the neighbourhood were pleased with the clearing of the jungles by them. But the Paharias—both the Maler and the Sauria groups—whom the British authorities had been pampering since the days of Cleveland, were displeased at this encroachment by the Santals.

The Santals were a peaceful people, not knowing theft and other crimes. According to Sherwill's report (1851) they were very fond of group dancing. Seventy to thirty topless whom held each other by the waistband, their hair highly ornamented with flowers or with the bunches of tasar silk dyed red, danced to the maddening music of the drums, pipes and flutes. The drunk male musicians with peacock feathers tied round their heads, danced in their front. The women changed as they danced, beating their heels on the ground.

The Santal held the truth sacred. If at all he had to swear he did it by the tiger's skin. He was an expert archer. The Santal women respected the elegant.

The Santal normally avoided taking service with any one. In the six-day Bandhana festival around January all the unmarried boys and girls assembled and selected each other for marriage and ate and drank. Their harvest festival was called Sohrae.

In 1809, there were 500 Santal families settled in the areas around the Rajmahal hills. In 1818, Sutherland was deputed to the hills tracts and in 1824 Ward was asked to assert the authority of the British *raj*

over this area. By the regulation I of 1827 the Paharias were granted certain privileges. In 1832 Ward, assisted by a surveyor, demarcated with solid masonary pillars the areas inhabited by the Paharias and the Santals, now known as the *Damn-i-Koh*, about 300 miles in circumference and in area 1,366 square miles, 500 of which were plains 246 square miles of these plains covered with jungles in 1851.

In 1835, about 427 Santal villages were established in the Daman (Damin). Besides, about 300 Santal villages were settled in the Manjhwa valley of the northern hills. In 1837, Pontet, a non-official European, was appointed the Superintendent of the Damin with clear instructions to encourage more and more Santals to clear the jungle, but no effort was made to extend to the Santals the protection granted to the Paharias.

In 1851, the population of the Damin was 117,045 living in 23,409 homes. Of these 83,265 were Santals. According to W.W. Hunter the area of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa where the Santals lived in the 1860s was "the shape of a curvedstrip, about four hundred miles long by a hundred broad, giving an area of forty thousand square miles." In the 1870s there were 455,513 Santals in the Santal Parganas, almost one-half of the total number living in the Bengal Presidency where they formed three per cent of the total number of the aborigines. The district of Manbhum had 132,445 Santals, according to the Census of 1872, Midnapur 96,921, the tributary states of Orissa 76,548, Singhbhum 51,132 and Hazarbagh 35,306. In 1951, the tribe numered 2.8 million.

The district (now a division) of the Santal Parganas (Santhalia) formed in 1855 as the southern portion of the Bhagalpur division of South Bihar, lies between 23°48′ and 25°19′ north latitude and 86°30′ and 87°58′ east longitude. It was bounded on the north by the district of Bhagalpur and Purnia ; on the east by Maldah, Murshidabad and Birbhum of Bengal ; on the south by the Burdwan and Manbhum districts and on the west by the Hazaribagh and Bhagalpur districts. On the east it had the river Ganges.

The population of the Santal Parganas in the 1872 census was 12,59,282, of which 2,64,313 were in the Daman-i-Koh. Such an enormous increase was partly due to the immigration of the Santals and party because they were prolific.

In 1851, Sherwill described the Santal as "a short, well-made and active man, quite inoffensive and cheerful". He had "the thick lips, high cheek-bones and spread nose of the Bheel, Kole and other hill tribes of Southern and Central India". He was beardless or nearly so. He was moreover an intelligent, obliging but timid creature ; very cowardly towards mankind, but brave when confronted with wild animals. The Santal was an industrious cultivator of the soil, and as he was unfettered with caste, he enjoyed existence in a far greater degree than did his neighbour, "the priest-ridden and castecrushed Hindu." Sherwill found

him eating the buffalo-meat, poultry, pork or pigeons and drinking 'pachai', a home-made brew and dancing with his women and friends with gay abandon.

Sherwill does not give any statistics of cultivation but he found the *pargana* Handwe under cultivation by the *ghatwals* (watchmen of the passes), the Santals and the Bhuinyas. In the *pargana* Godda the *ghatwals* and the Santals were cultivating the land with great labour. In fact the Santals had penetrated as far as Sultanabad east of the Rajmahal hills. In the *tappa* Belpetta, they and the Bhuinyas were dominating the scene.

In the Synthalia, the Santals tried to preserve their tribal exclusiveness. It seemed that after years of migrations, movement and unrest they had now found order and stability. They recreated their traditional village system.

Here the Santal tried to propitiate the demons who scattered diseases. Each household adored its own deity (Ora Bonga). Adjoining the Santal village was a grove of their sacred *sal* tree where the family gods resided. Goats, red cocks and chickens were sacrificed. They also had some important ceremonies : the admission into the family (birth) ; initiation into the tribe three days after birth ; the union of two tribes through marriage ; the death and exit from the tribe ; re-union with the departed fathers. As skilful and intrepid huntsmen, the Santals with their bow and arrows and axes regularly hunted the wild animals.

The village *panchayat* decided disputes. The descendant or the original founder of the village became the *manjhi* and appointed his depty (*Paramanik*). The *manjhi* was responsible for all misdeeds in his village. About 12 villages had above them a *parganait*. The *parganait* collected the rent from the *manjhis* and passed it on to the Superintendent. The *jog-manjhi* and the *jog-paramanik* guided the children.

Burhait was a prosperous village with a good bazar and two bi-weekly *hats* (mandis). Gradually came to the newly set up villages the non-tribal traders who often became usurers. The Santals, who had never used money and got their necessities by barter, had now to pay the rent in cash and whenever they sold their corn they were cheated.

The Santals were an orderly people and had been welcomed wherever they had migrated. They hardly knew fighting, except in the way of mimic fights during the village festivals or around the watchfire in the legends. They always loved freedom and want to live as free people.

The Santals had to travel to distant Bhagalpur, Birbhum or Aurangabad to seek justice and the local *daroga* and the excise staff or the *amlas* (subordinate officers) of the courts always connived with the non-tribal moneylenders, zamindars and others.

The dikku used his skill and cunning to wrench from the ignorant Santal all that he possessed. The Santal's claim that whatever land he

reclaimed belonged to him was ignored.

Existing Historical Literature

Not much historical work is available on the theme of Santal movement. J. Marshman (*History of India*, Part II), J.T. Wheeler (*A Short History of India*), Lee-Warner (*Life of the Marques of Dalhousie*, vol. II), C.F. Buckland (*Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors, 1854-1898*, vol. I) have made brief references to the *hool*, the first phase of the movement. E.T. Dalton, W.W. Hunter, H.H. Risley, F.B. Bradley-Birt and L.S.S. O'Malley were administrators-turned-anthropologists and treated the Santals as 'noble savages'. Except, Bradley-Birt, who wrote a monograph on the Santal Parganas in 1905, they did not recognise the special problem of the Santals and often studied them along with other tribes. Besides, they had an administrator's prejudice against the violent rebellion of the Santals and looked at things with western standard and values.

The exception perhaps is W.W. Hunter's treatment of the Santal rebellion in *The Annals of Rural Bengal* (1868). It is a sympathetic study which refers to the developments of European enterprises like the indigo factories, the rail-road construction, etc., which benefited the Santal labourers, but does not refer to the ill-treatment of Santal women by the European engineers and others. It does not even refer to the Santal resentment at the encroachment of their isolated existence. Belonging to the imperialist school, Hunter hoped that the Santals would some day accept 'civilisation'.

According to Ranajit Guha (*Subaltern Studies* II, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1983), the "sympathy expressed for the enemies of the Raj in the tertiary discourse" like Suprakash Ray's *Bharater Krishak-bidroha O Ganatantrik Sangram* (Vol. I, Calcutta, 1966) is similar to that in the "colonial secondary discourse" like Hunter's. However, for Hunter the *hool* was caused by "a local malignancy in an otherwise healthy body—the failure of a district administration to act up to the then emerging ideal of the Raj as the *ma-baap* of the peasantary and protect them from the tyranny of wicked elements within the native society itself." On the other hand, Ray thought that the very presence of the British colonial power in India had compelled these tribals to raise in revolt, for the landlords and moneylenders derived their authority from the new regulations of Cornwallis as well as from the contract replacing custom and money economy taking the place of barter. In that sence, the *hool* was a critique of the imperial system itself. No wonder Ray considers the *hool* as "the precursor" of the great rebellion of 1857.

Another writer L. Natarajan (*Peasant Uprisings in India, 1850-1900*, Bombay, 1953) also thinks that "the clarion call that summoned the Santhals to battle" was soon heard elsewhere : the Indigo unrest of 1860,

the Pabna and Bogra uprising of 1872, the Maratha Peasant Rising in Poona and Ahmadnagar in 1875-76. This is supported by Abdulla Rasul (*Saontal Bidroher Amar Kahani*, Calcutta, 1954).

If Natarajan and Rasul ignore the element of religiosity in the *hool*, and emphasise its secular aspects, Ray, Datta and others take note of the religious aspect of the movement.

R. Carstairs, who served in the Santal Parganas for more than a decade in the late nineteenth century, published an intesesting historical novel entitled *Harma's Village* (1935) and a memoir, *The Little World of an Indian District Officer* (London, 1912), which are sympathetic studies— the first of the *Hool* (rising) of 1855-56 and the second party on the Kharwar movement.

The first independent study of the strictly historical nature of the Santal rising of 1855 was that of the late K.K. Dutta : *The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57* (Calcutta, 1940). The author, born and brought up in the Santal Parganas district, consulted some important original records available in the record-rooms of Dumka, the headquarters of this district, as well as some contemporary and later accounts of the *hool* in Bengali. He heavily relied on an article on the *hool* by an anonymous writer, which appeared in the *Calcutta Review* in 1856.

Unfortunately the Santals, like other tribals, left no written accounts, but Dr. Dutta did not even care to take note of their oral tradition as contained in *Chotrae Desmanjhi reak Katha* published by the Northern Churches in 1938. A. Mitra in his *Hand Book* : *Bankura* (Calcutta, 1953), refers to another work in Santali *Mare Hapram Ko Reak Katha*, Nor did Datta take up Carstair's *memoirs* and the *Settlement Report* of the Santal Parganas (McPherson, 1910).

As McPherson says (Foreword to *Harma's Village*), Carstairs, a household name among the Santals, played a significant role in the foundation of the Santal system with its unique agrarian code. Wood, who served in the Santal Parganas from 1860 to 1879 and later John Boxwell, W.B. Oldham and Carstairs were sympathetic interpreters of the spirit behind the Act XXXVII of 1855 and the Regulation III of 1872.

Dr. Datta's main emphasis was on the anti-*mahajan* (grocer-cum-usurer) stance of the rebels. He underlayed the anti-British dimension, presumably because he was a government servant.

In 1945, W.G. Archer and W.J. Gulshaw in their paper on the Santal Rebellion (*Man in India*, Ranchi, vol. 25, no. 4, Dec. 1945), extensively quoted from E.G. Man's work *Sonthalia* and the Sonthals (London, 1867) and asserted that the ignorance and the inexperience of the British authorities in dealing with the primitive tribes was an important cause of the rebellion.

The first Indian writer to understand the Santal point of view was N.B. Roy, who presented two papers on the *hool* to the Indian Historical

Records Commission, New Delhi, in 1960 and 1961. He criticised the stereotype begun by Hunter, Bradley-Birt, K.K. Datta and others that the Santals bore no ill-will against the alien government and the European planters and others and that their wrath was directed against the Hindu and Muslim usurers, *darogas* and others.

Even though the Santals gained economically by the development of the indigo and silk industry and the introduction of the railways, they hated the European and Eurasian entrepreneurs, railway engineers, planters, Christian missionaries and others who threatened the Santal's traditional way of life. They could not tolerate the insult to the Santal women. Hence they "Swore before their God that not one *Feringhie* could escape their vengeance."

P.O. Bodding's *Kharwar Movement among the Santals*, published in 1921-22 was an anthropological study. John Macdongall's "Agrarian reform *versus* religious revitalization in collective resistance to peasantization among the Mundas, Oraons and Santals, 1858-95' (*Contribution to Indian Society*, vol. II, no. 2, Delhi, 1977) was a sociological study. Aditya Prasad Jha published a readable paper based on government records entitled 'Nature of the Santal Unrest of 1878-75 and the origin of the Sapha Har Movement' (*Indian Historical Records Commission Proceedings*, vol. 85, no. 2, part I, New Delhi, Feb. 1960) analysing the causes and nature of the movement. Earlier Nandlal Chatterjee had published a paper on 'A Sanyasi Agitator from Lucknow among the Santals of Hazaribagh' (Ibid., vol. 28, part II, 1954). Chatterjee totally relied on some documents he found in the Lucknow Archives pertaining to the house arrest of this Sanyasi, but could not find a linkage between him and the movement in the Santal Parganas. He mentioned, however, the Sanyasi's hankering for going over to the Santal Parganas.

The present study aims at touching upon the main aspects of the Santal movement. It will not only deal with the economic, social and other causes of the two phases of the movement but will also take note of charismatic leadership.

The leaders of both the phases of the millenarian movement claimed to be the prophets of a golden era for their distressed people. Sidhu and Kanhu, Bhagirit and Dubia Gosain, like Ganga Narain Singh of the Bhumij Revolt (1832-33) and Birsa of the Munda Movement (1896-1901) were intelligent, charismatic leader, supposed to possess super-human powers. Like a messiah they wanted to bring back the social order of the good old days and their own raj.

Sidhu and Kanhu declared themselves as rajas determined to take possession of the whole country. No one could stop them as this was the order from the Thakur (God) who had descended from heaven.

The Santal Rebellion

As the Santals were prospering in the Daman-i-Koh, the greedy non-tribal zamindars, living near its borders as well as the traders-cum-money-lenders now living within the Damin, began to cast a lustful eye on the prospering land. Had the Regulation I of 1827, meant to protect the Paharias been extended to the Santals, the latter might have been saved from the net of these non-tribals. But no such step was taken, trusting blindly in his present possession of the land, the Santal hardly realized that there were other and more subtle methods of oppression than being rudely driven from soil.

The Santal being very improvident hardly thought of the future and began borrowing from the non-tribals, who used false weight and measures to deceive the simple Santal. Ignorant in the art of writing or arithmetic, the Santal lay at the mercy of the repacious *mahajan* (trader-cum-usurer). All the evidences the poor debtor advanced was a knotted string, each knot representing one rupee advanced and the space between the knots indicating the number of years which had elapsed since he got the loan. But this was never accepted by the court in the face of the usurer's ledgers, mortgage deeds, etc.

Whether there was a wedding or a festival the Santal would be advanced money and the poor fellow would execute a bond of whose contents he knew nothing. One advance led to another and the Santal fell deeper and deeper in debt. Interest mounted up rapidly. And at an opportune moment the debtor's cattle were taken away to pay the interest of the loan and ultimately the debtor became a slave, a bonded labourer of the *mahajan*, losing the freedom even of his wife, children and grand-children.

Against this condition of rank slavery, the law had made no provision. Indeed, it was his ultimate recourse to the law that made the usurer's position secure. The bonds executed by the ignorant Santal were honoured by the courts and civil suits were decreed in favour of the *mahajan*. The signature of the santal was a mere scratch of an arrow-head duly attested by dishonest witnesses.

In many cases the Santal had never taken any loan and bonds were forged by dishonest moneylenders to grab his land and cattle. Interest on loan ranged from 50 to 500 per cent.

Carstairs in his *Harma's Village* provides the examples of Garbhu Manjhi and Harma Manjhi, who fell in the trap of a usurer Kenaram Bhagat. The former had taken to new types of alcohol and hardly realised that he was getting into the trap while the latter's bond was forged. An anonymous writer in the Calcutta Review (vol. 26, no. 51, Calcutta, 1940) refers to Durga Manjhi, once a contented family man, who took from a trader Baldeo Singh a loan of Rs. 4 on 25 per cent interest. When the day of repayment came, Baldeo demanded and got

eight rupees, but gave no receipt. Another usurer Haladhar Chaudhary advanced the same Santal six rupees but got a bond executed for thirteen.

It was usual for the non-tribal traders or grocers to use short weight, taking many times more grain than they should get as the value of the debt. In case Santal had not the required money to pay, an equivalent for the sum was taken in his grain, fruit, cattle, etc. When the Santal wanted to sell his *ghee* (clarified butter), the trader measured it in the vessels with false bottoms. One Jattu Manjhi collected from the forest a basket of the choicest fruit, dried and prepared them and came to sell them in a town. He was given an equal weight in rice, even though the fruit should have fetched 32 times more than the rice's price. Whenever a Santal came to exchange his rice for salt, oil, cloth, and gunpowder, the dishonest non-tribal trader used heavy weights in ascertaining the quantity of grain, but light ones in weighing their own articles. If by chance the Santal protested, the trader told him curtly that the articles on which the excise tax was levied, had a special mode of measurement.

Whenever a Santal immigrant arrived, he needed some food when he was clearing the jungle and cultivating the land. The mahajan advanced him some corn, but as soon as the poor man was about to harvest the crop, the *mahajan* took the whole thing away. Soon the whole Santal family became his slave and year after year they toiled for their master. In case the Santal tried to escape, the civil and criminal courts helped the usurer.

The daroga was always helping the usurer, the badgemen (*Chaprasis*) of the courts were in the latter's pay roll. The barkandazes, the constables, the clerks, all of them helped the usurer in return for some illegal gratification. If at all some Santals ventured to go to the court of Deoghar or Bhagalpur, the usurer bribed the *amlas* (subordinate officers or assistants) of the courts there and the Santals' petitions were held back. These poor souls had no money to pay the lawyers, *peshkars* and others. And even then the European officer would ask the same unscrupulous *daroga* to enquire and report. With the usurers' bribe, he would invariably report against the Santal.

Besides the usurers and the government officers, the non-tribal zamindars and petty landholders also oppressed the Santals. If a Manik Chaudhary had a marriage or a funeral, he would levy a *salamee* (voluntary offering) and collect the required amount. If an influential man needed some carts and labourers he would ask the Santal village chiefs to supply them free. Even rice and other articles would be forcibly taken away from the Santals without paying any price.

Not only the zamindars but their retainers, the *gomastas*, the peons and others, oppressed the Santals. If a Santal had been paying six annas for his small piece of land, the *gomasta* would ask for six rupees. In the case of any resistance the police and the court were always ready to

harass the Santals.

It was quite common for the police to treat a natural death among the Santals as unnatural to exact money. A bribe from a usurer to the police could get the arrest of a Santal on some flimsy or cooked-up charge. The *sazawal* of the revenue department of the government, who collected the revenue from the parganaits, the manjhis or the villagers would very often charge double the amount under demand.

The combined system of extortion, oppressive exactions, forcible dispossession of land, abuses and personal violence and other tyrannies, false measures at the bazar and *hat* (market), trespasses by the rich through their cattle, horses and elephants on the crops of the Santals—all these were the order of the day. Sometimes, some Santals were even asked to give a security for good conduct. Embarrassing pledges were required for debts. The Munsif's court would issue notices to the debtor, but the usurer would see that the summons did not reach the victim. And then by a writ of attachment on his movable property, the Santal would be ruined. Without any warning the Santal's cows and homestead would be sold up, not leaving even the household vessels and the cheap ornaments of the females.

In 1848, the Santals of three villages fled in view of the fraudulent, false or exaggerated civil suits by the usurers which they could not cope with. The simple Santals hardly knew the intricacies of the law, let alone the chicanery and legal nuances involved.

Redress was out of the question. The English officials at the district headquarters were quite ignorant of the distress of the Santals. Those who knew something, like Pontet, or young Ashley Eden, proposed some measures but were overruled by their superiors, especially the Bhagalpur Commissioner. A single English officer, Pontent, had been managing the vast area. From the daily routine of his revenue work he had no time to look into the habits and necessities of the Santals.

The Government of the English East India Company was happy that from Rs. 2,000 in 1838, the annual ground rent of the Damin had risen in 1951 to Rs. 44,000 and to about Rs. 68,000 in 1954. But any administrative measure, which would cost money, was avoided.

The pressure of the European entrepreneurs had already been felt by the Santal since they immigrated into the Damin and adjoining areas. One Farquhar and others were active in the iron and other mining operations. Around 1855, Messrs Mackey and Company of Calcutta started the Birbhum Iron Works. Besides, the silk industry, coal mining industry and indigo mining activities at Kahalgaon, Maheshpur and Pakur employed a number of Eurasians and Europeans.

The Santals believed in spirits and witches. Since the spirits were supposed to dwell on the trees and the hill tops and guarded them against the onslaughts of the foreigners, the Santals hated the actions of the

railway department in clearing the jungles, making bridges and cutting of the hills for laying the rails, for these exercises would disturb the spirits.

According to the *Bengal Harkaru* (14 July 1855), the railway contractors and officers sometimes did not pay the proper wages to the Santal labourers employed by them. They did not pay for the eggs, fowls, milk, etc., which they took from the Santals. And they also carried away some Santal women.

Even as the Santals were anxious about these encroachments, they were feeling the pressure of Hindu affluent neighbours. They had to attend their religious festivals where they were looked down upon. The famous temple of Baidyanath (Shiva) at Deoghar was a great centre of Hindu pilgrimage in the nineteenth century. The Santal was drawn into the religious ceremonies and fairs of Shivaratri and Shravan in this temple and was dazed at the enormity and complexities of these. No wonder he first tried to protect his own identity and later in the Kherwar movement he tried to imitate some Hindu religious customs.

Then in 1854 the landscape of Santhalia began to change. The construction of the rail-roads had begun, and high embankments, heavy cuttings, many-arched bridges, etc. created a demand for labour. Also, labour was needed in the newly developed tea-gardens in Assam. Naturally enough, contractors started working in the area to recruit Santal labourers. The Magistrate of Birbhum reported to the Commissioner of the Burdwan division on 18 February 1855 that the very extensive works carried on by the railway authorities and the employment given by them to the vast numbers of the Santals had "greatly ameliorated" their conditions and the "universally abundant harvest" had also contributed to their welfare.

Already during the first half of the nineteenth century indigo factories had been set up in the Santhalia by some European entrepreneurs, paying to the Santal labourers more than they were getting from others. Now many Europeans and Eurasians were employed in the railways and in the different industries. In Rajmahal, there was a separate European colony in 1855. The European missionaries and planters were quite active in the Santhalis and its periphery.

Thus the Santals associated with these two capitalist enterprises under the patronage of the Company's government, "their girdles full of coi, and their women covered with silver jewellery", now realized the galling situation their brethren were in. Those who did not get the benefit of these enterprises felt restless at the bondage under the usurers and the zamindars who prevented them from grabbing this opportunity of ameliorating their condition.

In the words of F.B. Bradley-Birt (*The Story of An Indian Upland*), the advance of 'civilization' near Daman-i-Koh through the railways finally stirred the long suffering Santal to vindicate his right. The indigo

industry, the railways and the new roads as well as the new system of administration badly affected the isolated existence of the Santals. Some European engineers and others of the railways molested the Santal women. A few women were abducted and even murdered. One European employee of the railways carried off two Santal women, wounded a Santal man and killed another. Another one at Sitapahar used to roam about with a *mashal* (torch) at night and dishonour the Santal women indiscriminately. Such insults were difficult to tolerate. No wonder the Santals said in anguish,

"Saheb Rule is troublefull,
Shall we go or stay ?"

W.G. Gulshaw finds a linkage between the *hool* and the official ignorance and inexperience in dealing with the Santals as well as the emotional strain caused to the Santal by the loss of his holding. Of course, nobody can deny the factors enumerated by E.G. Man (*The Santhalia and the Santhals*); the rapacious spirit of the *mahajans*; the misery caused by the system of allowing personal and hereditary bondage for the debt, the police oppressions and corruption and the ineffectiveness of the judiciary to grant some protection to the Santals.

The increase of the revenues by the government of the *Khas mahals* (Daman) and of the parganas of Sultanabad, Amour and Kankija was one of the main reasons of the rising.

According to MacPherson (*Sonthal Parganas Settlement Report*), initially the oppressions by the usurers and others was officially recognised as its cause but by the turn of the nineteenth century it was "generally recognised that a deeper, or at any rate, a supervening cause was the Santal yearning for independence, a dream of the ancient days when they had no overlords, perhaps a memory of the pre-historic times when, according to some speculators, they were themselves masters of the Gangetic valley and had not yet been driven back by the Aryan invaders."

According to the report of Oldham, the movement of 1855 originated in the Santal yearning for independence and then it drew to it "all these whose patriotism was stimulated by the recollection of their sufferings at the hands of the usurers and the police; but the fundamental idea at work and that which was attempted to be put in practice was the establishment of a Sonthal realm and kingdom."

At last the Hor had taken their fate in their own hands. This was to be a real war, even though a losing one. The Santals knew that in the woods the bowmen would be more effective than the troops. And then the soldiers in uniform would be an easy prey to the arrows.

Beginnings of the Hool

No wonder in the winter of 1854-55, the Santals appeared to be agitated, in spite of high prices for their grain and high wages for their labour. The rich Santals were no longer willing to be cheated, baffled and befooled by the mahajans, who would take undue advantage of the high prices. The labourers were determined no more to be the slaves of the usurers.

There were series of attacks on the *mahajans'* house at night. These were obviously reprisals on their cruelties. When the so-called decoits (Robinhoods) were arrested and punished, there was general resentment that their oppressors had not even been reprimanded.

The parganists, the manjhis and other prominent Santals then began to assemble and discuss the proper course of action. They even appealed to the Bhagalpur Commissioner, but in vain. There was a strange feeling, real and intense, that something should be done. Even in the remotest villages the Santals after dusk met his neighbourers at the Manjhi Than and held consultations in whispers. Only a spark was needed for this murmer of protest to take the form of a revolt.

The simmering discontent was not confined to the Daman-I-Koh. The Santals to the West and South of this tract were also agitated. Frequent references were made to a mythical figure, Morgo Raja, a Santal chief living near the Parasnath hill in the Hazaribagh district, who was said to attempt a union between the original habitat of the Santals with the new settlements. Mir Abbas Ali, a former Amir of Sind then residing in Hazaribagh, was said to have invited the Santals through his servant, Arjun Santal, to help in the hunting sport and then sympathised with the lot of the Santals. No concrete proof was, however, found of the ex-Amir fanning the flame of the Santal discontent.

Meanwhile, a religious dimension was coming to the Santal unrest. Early in 1854, Bir Singh, the parganait of Sasan in Lakshmipur, claimed that the God Chando Bonga inspired him with some magical powers so that he could put anybody into deep slumber and rob him. Soon he formed a Rabinhood group of some manjhis, paramaniks and others and raided the houses of Ishwari Bhagat and Tilak Bhagat of Lattipara, an oilman Jit of Bagsisa and in many houses at Baripur.

The *dikkus* first complained to Mahesh Lal Datta, the oppressive daroga of Dighi since 1835, and then to the Rani of the Pakur raj. The diwan of the raj sent the *naib* of the Santali mahals to enquire into the night meetings, but the *naib* beat up Bir Singh Manjhi at his *kachahari* with shoes and fined him, instead of showing a conciliatory attitude.

So, the Rob Roy remained active : the house of a rich *dikku* at Kusma near Barhait was looted and the Paharia watchmen ran away in fear.

Now the daroga Mahesh Datta tried to arrest the Santal Robinhoods.

He harassed an innocent Santal at the instigation of some usurers as the former had with him some gold coins. The Santal resisted and warned the *daroga* of dire consequences if he continued to harass the innocent Santals.

Early in 1855, the same Santals was arrested by the *daroga*. This naturally acted as a spark, and six to seven thousand Santals from Birbhum, Bankura and Chota Nagpur assembled for avenging the punishment meted out to the Santals for dacoities in the houses of *mahajans*.

Leadership

At this juncture appeared the charismatic leaders, the messiahs to free their people. They were two brothers, Sidhu and Kanhu of Bhagnadihi, half a mile to the north-east of Barhait and their unassuming brothers Chand and Bhairab.

Sidhu and Kanhu told their Santal brethern that one night when they were brooding over certain things at home, a piece of paper fell on Sidhu's head and the Thakur (God) appeared before them. He was like a whiteman in locks but in native dress. He had ten fingers in each hand and held a white book in which he was writing. He presented to the two brothers twenty pieces of paper, in five batches, four in each. Then he ascended upwards and disappeared. Again a piece of paper fell on Sidhu's head followed by the entry of two men, each with six fingers in one hand, who explained the gist of the god's order and vanished.

Each day of the week for sometimes the apparition of the Thakur appeared before the favourable apostles—sometimes in a flame of fire, with a book, some white paper and a knife; at another in the figure of the Santal's special admiration—a solid cart wheel. The words of the God were written in the slavery pages of the book and upon the white leaves of the single scrap of paper. The literate Santals later deciphered and interpreted these writings. But the two brothers knew by intuition what they meant.

Soon trusted messengers carried the message along with the branch of a sal tree, a symbol like the fiery cross of the Christians or the *chapati* and lotus flower of the Revolt of 1857, to every Santal village.

In the garden of the leaders was erected a statue of the Thakur, a small circular mound of mud, two feet in diameter and raised a few inches from the earth. Upon the centre of this mound was another circle of mud two inches in diameter—the figure of a cart-wheel. A canopy was constructed to shelter it.

Streams of Santals poured in to offer grain and milk, and to sacrifice goats and buffaloes. Many devotees claimed that they felt the divine presence there. They were shown the God's written order that the Santals should assembly on a particular day at the house of Sidhu, now called

Thakur-bari (God's house) to hear the command. Later there was a Thakur-bari in the headquarters of the pargana.

According to Sidhu Manjhi (vide his examination on 8 November 1855), the consultations at his house continued for a couple of months. Since Pontet and Mahesh *daroga* had let them down, the God descended from the heaven in the form of a cart-wheel and asked him to kill these two and the *mahajans*. Only then they could have justice.

Sidhu's brother Kanhu stated (examination on 20 December 1855) that when in Baisakh (around May) the God descended on his house, he told him to take charge of the Santals; the mahajans and zamindars were to be banished or fought against.

Before the signal for the revolt was given, all the Santal villages were purified and all the evil spirits were driven out. Sidhu and Kanhu therefore gave orders for a general drive against witches in their midst. Any woman suspected to be a witch was killed. If her relatives objected, they too were threatened.

Even then appeals were sent to the Bhagalpur authorities for a settlement, but in vain. Then the two leaders issued an order that each family should send its men to fight.

Strangely enough, in his annual report of 28 May 1855 Pontet referred to the strained relations of the Santals with the usurers, the high interest of 50 per cent charged, and some complaints against the railway employees, who were making the new Loop line from Burdwan to Rajmahal, but he did not even imagine that an open revolt was impending.

No wonder the Bhagalpur Commissioner was taken aback when he learnt that within a short time the Santals had burnt the houses of thousands and they had with hatchets and arrows killed not only the *daroga* of Dighi and his *barkandazes*, but several European men and women and many Indians. He was surprised at their audacity "to lay open claim to the Government of the country" and appointed his own Thakur or Suba with three *diwans* to exercise supreme power. Under them every *pargana* was headed by a 'raja' who led the plundering parties.

Progress

On 30 June, a full-moon day, 10,000 Santals assembled at Bhagnadihi. The Thakur's order was announced and Kirta, Bhadoo and Sunnoo—all Manjhis—wrote a memorandum at Sidhu's direction, addressed to the Government, with copies to the Commissioner, Collector and the Magistrate of Bhagalpur as well as of Birbhum and to the *darogas* of the Dighi and Rajmahal thanas, as also to the zamindars and others, demanding replies within a fortnight.

The rate of revenue, according to the divine command, was to be

two annas on a buffalo-plough, one anna on a bullock-plough, half an anna on a cow-plough per year. The rate of interest on the money lent was to be only one pice in a rupee annually. All the *mahajans* and *darogas* were to be murdered. Sidhu added that even the Superintendent of the Daman-i-Koh was to be done away with. The traders, zamindars, and all rich Bengalis were to be banished from the Santhalia. They should not keep in touch with the Daman-i-Koh. Those who resisted should be fought. The enemy's guns would be ineffective : the bullets would be transformed into water.

According to the Karun and Panchkathia records, quoted by K.K. Datta, the Santals were determined to set up their own *raj* (government). Such dikkus like the potters, oilmen, black-smiths, Muslim weavers, shoe-makers and sweepers who were helpful to the Santals in various ways, were to be spared. Some of them acted as the spies and others made their arms.

According to the statement of one Balai Manjhi (14 July 1855), the Thakur assured Sidhu and Kanhu that he himself would fight the *Sahibs* (white officers) and white soldiers. Mother Ganges would assist the Thakur. Fire would rain from the heaven. The reign of Truth would now begin and true justice would be administered. The *Sahibs* had made things bad, allowing the investigating subordinate officers to take bribes. So the country no longer belonged to the *Sahibs*. In any case, they could not be allowed to stay on in the area north of the Ganges. If they persisted, "the Sahibs will be killed by the hand of God in person". The Santals would not be hit by their bullets. Their elephants and horses would of their own accord, come to the Santals. If they fought, two days would be as one day and two nights as one night.

According to a manifesto issued in the Kaithi (a dialect of Hindi) issued by the Santals on 25 July 1855 the sins of the *mahajans* and the *amlas* were great and the white administrators were careless.

In early July 1855, the Santal rebels proceeded from Bhagnadihi to the Panchkathia bazar to get the blessings of a much venerated goddess and soon killed five *dikkus*. On 7 July Mahesh daroga was killed along with 18 others, armed retainers, village watchmen and *Mahjaans*. This was followed by the murder of Pratap Narayan, the Naib Sazawal of thana Kurharia in the Godda Subdivision. The rebellion progressed like a wild fire.

Next, the rich *mahajans* of the Barhait bazar was plundered. The rebels with poisoned arrows, axes and swords now moved in different directions, plundering the *dikkus* and creating a panic among the latter who fled in different directions. On their way from Babupur to Panchkathia they killed a Muslim Naib Sazawal.

At the outset the Santals even thought of marching to Calcutta to warn the authorities there. But once they had tasted blood there was no

looking back.

According to the contemporary newspapers of Catcutta—the *Friend of India*, the *Englishman*, the *Bengal Hurkaru* and the *Calcutta Review*, for a whole fortnight the Santals carried fire and sword throughout the western districts.

Not even twelve hundred troops could be available within eighty miles of the rebels and the regular troops could not operate in the jungles and the terrains in the rainy season. The Paharia rangers were sent from Bhagalpur, but they were repulsed by the Santal bowmen.

According to the statement of one Sheikh Sunroo, Sidhu and Kanhu were now the new kings and they were carried about in a palanquin with a retinue of servants. They maintained their courtiers for consultations and scribes for recording the decisions. The Santal leaders took the title of *Suba* (*Subedar*) and began to exercise the supreme authority. They proclaimed that the British Raj (the Company's rule) had been replaced by the Raj of *Hor*—the reign of truth.

The Officer-in-charge of the Sub-division of Aurangabad reported that the rebels were determined to kill all the Europeans, so that an incarnation of God among them was to rule as a king. They had, no doubt, that the Company's officers were responsible for the atrocities committed by its subordinate officers. At least the charge of negligence could not be rebutted. Hence the anti-English pronouncements were justified.

It is indeedstrange that a contemporary writer in the *Calcutta Review* attributed the revolt to "the fanatic spirit of religious superstition" as well as to the Santals' attachment to the "strong drinks and wild dance" which fanned "the lurking flame".

The animus against the *feringi* (whiteman) was obvious and his activities were beyond their comprehension. The newly installed railways were a special target of attack. One can imagine the horror of the Santals on seeing the rail carriages and engines moving without any horse or ox or buffalo pulling them. No wonder the bungalows of the railway engineers, overseers, contractors and planters near Aurangabad were indiscriminately attacked. The rail-road and allied constructions between Sikrigali and Pirpainty were totally stopped. The rebels seemed determined to destroy everything connected with the railway works. Their anger was specially aroused by the debauching of their women and the bullying of the Santal labourers. One Henry Bradon, riding an elephant, was killed along with his mount and his son was murdered twenty miles away. Another Englishman Henshaw was killed while escaping on an elephant.

Some of the Santal ryots of the Rani of the Maheshpur raj told her clearly that they would no longer pay rents to her for the Goddess Kali Mayi had asked them not to be the subjects of any government any

more but to be independent and "*the Feringhees* would of their own accord come to them to pay tribute." The hands and feet of some *dikku* men and women were cut off and the victims sacrificed before Goddess Kali.

The rebels carried not only bows, poisoned arrows axes, swords and spears but also some guns. Acccording to contemporary Bengali songs composed by Ray Krishnadas of Kulkuri in the Birbhum district, as the Santals entered Nagore, the old capital of birbhum, even the old men with sticks in their hands and women began to run away. The old Muslim fakirs exhorted Satyapir, a God, to save them, and fled. The Santals still beheaded about fifty people.

One group of rebels raided the Hiranpur bazar, pludering and killing many *dikkus.* The Pakur raj palace was also plundered and pearls and jewels taken away.

Rumours were common. One was that mythical snakes were moving about, swallowing men. Naturally the Santals were in great terror. Another was that a misterious buffalo was wandering about and wherever it grazed people died. So the Santals dug up all the grass around their houses. Yet another rumour was that the people were coming to kill all the *dikkus*, especially the Bengalis hated by the Santals. The Santals were asked to hang up bullock skins and flutes at the village boundaries to indicate that only Santals lived there.

The revels' plan of bathing in the Ganges near Rajmahal as well as to carry about in a palanquin some in carnation of the Thakur, who was at one time a child-god, born of a woman at Kutjundlee, who suddenly grew into a man, did not materialise. For this incarnation, a man, a woman, and a virgin, it was said, cut some grass. And a bundle of such grass was said to have been transformed into a fortress of gold, containing a well of silver, for his residence. It was also said that a goddess descended at Kamalpur. She looked like a very old woman. At another place two people claimed to have communicated with the God. These stories were circulated to keep up the morale of the people. The families with equal number of children were asked to exchange presents and become friends, presumably to cultivate a strong feeling of solidarity between individuals and families to present a common front. The house of the raja of Ambar at Kudanasa was burnt to ashes and an indigo factory was destroyed.

Hunter, Bradley-Birt and other writers emphasize the anti-Hindu stance of the movement. But how is it then that the rebels borrowed the Hindu royal title of *Adwait-Dharmavatar* (Non-dual Incarnation of Truth)? Another such epithet used by the Santal leader was *Sarvopam-pujya Dharmo Sharir Dharma* (most respected being, the very embodiment of *Dharma*). Not only that, later in the Kherwar movement they worshipped some Hindu gods and goddesses and imitated some Hindu

customs.

The rebels not only organised military units, but also a semblance of administration with their own *nazirs*, *jamadars*, *diwans*, and *pyadas* who addressed Sidhu and Kanhu as Thakurs. The *diwan* was the custodian of plundered gold, silver, brass, copper, iron, tasar (silk) clothes, and oxen.

Some non-tribals also joined the rebels. One Durga Manjhi assured two Bengalis that they and their property would be spared. This suggests that some non-tribals were on the same wave length as the rebels. The *parwanas* issued by Sidhu and Kanhu to the Santal soldiers and the *ghatwals* were obviously written by some non-tribal scribe. The English soldiers were referred to as *gora* regiments of the English. Salutations were offered in the *parwanas* to Saraswati (the goddess of learning), but she was erroneously referred to as the Goddess of war, obviously confusing her with Durga.

The non-tribals like the milkmen, oilmen, blacksmiths and potters helped the Santals by supplying them yoghurt, arms and earthenwares. They also acted as spies, scouts, etc., signalling them about the approach of the government troops. They also helped them in locating the richest loot available. In the Manihari *tappa*, north of Godda, Baburam Shah, an oilman of Kokra and three milkmen—Debu Kupari of Kothi, Ganpat of Kamalchak and Jhupru of Silitari—played a leading role in the revolt. Several other lower caste Hindus—the fishermen, Dhanuks and others—supported the Santal rebels.

Some Christian missionaries, like one Droese claimed that those Santal villages which contained even a few who were familiar with Chirstianity, were the last to join the revolt.

On the other hand, several zamindars as far as the Purnia district loyal to the British, lent their elephants to be attached to different detachments for their entry into the inaccessible areas. The government arranged their fodder and wages for the mahauts. The Nawab Nazim of Murshidabad, however, offered to bear himself all the expenses of the elephants.

The systematic attack on the foreign engineers and planters was aimed at inagurating an independent Santal raj by sweeping away the British raj. The Santals openly boasted that the Company's rule had ended and the rule of the *Suba* had begun. According to R.N. Craiz, an assistant to a railway engineer, they were determined to attack Murshidabad and claimed that they had been authorized by God to govern the whole of Bengal, which they were eager to do.

Shrikhand where the East Indian Engineers had their quarters was according to Ashley Eden's report, was attacked and all the houses burnt, The rebels wanted to destroy everything connected with the railways for they disliked the bullying of the Santal labourers. At Palso the

bungalows made for a central station of the railways was completely destroyed.

To the west of Rajmahal the government troops failed to stop the rebel activities. To prevent the march of the rebels to the south of the Damodar river and on the Grand Trunk Road and to protect the areas to its north and in the Birbhum district the Ramgarh Irregular Light Horse, the Governor-General's Body Guards, portions of the 2nd Grenadiers, of the 50th, 56th and the 37th Regiments and 200 Nizamat sepoys of the Nawab of Murshidabad with 30 of his elephants and 32 horses were employed. Later the 63rd Native Infantry were also mobilised and on the Murshidabad border were employed the 7th and the 31st Native Infantry and in the Bhagalpur district the Hill Rangers and parts of the 40th, 42nd and 13th regiments N.I. from Danapur.

But such was the fury of the Santal attack that in the middle of July during an attack 160 *barkandazes* hid themselves in the high grass. This was followed by the government troops killing or wounding 200 Santals. On 16 July, Braddon, an indigo planter, was killed, a Sargeant-Major was cut to pieces, and 25 men of the Hill Rangers were killed or wounded. The remaining Hill Rangers retreated. Sidhu was arrested through the treachery of one Tulsi Santal and his associates.

Even so, the whole area from Telganga to the south-west of Birbhum, on the Grand Trunk Road and Sainthia to the south-east of Bhagalpur and Rajmahal on the Ganges, was at the mercy of the Santals, and murder, arson and pillage were common. The rebels were active not only along Murshidabad border but at Nalhati, Rampur hat, Nagore, Nangola, Gurjari and other places in the Birbhum district, as well as around Barkop, Godda and other places in the Bhagalpur division.

At Pialapur 2,000 Santals fought the English troops and Kishan Singh, a stooge of the English, and his retainers were badly defeated. Captain Francis, commanding a detachment of the 13th Native Infantry, retreated with heavy loss and soon after 800 Santals attacked his camp.

At one point it was rumoured that a large number of Santals was migrating to the banks of the Barkar river. But no untoward incident occurred.

Nature of the Fighting and the Suppression of the Revolt

The Paharias by and large remained aloof, but at places they followed the Santal rebels, seizing any opportunity for loot. And of course the Hill Rangers of Bhagalpur who took a leading part in the suppression of the revolt, were all Paharias. Some Bhuinyas also fought from the British side.

From July 1833 to early 1856 the whole Santhalia was on the war-path and even the combined mopping-up operations by the army, police,

the forces of the zamindars and the men of the planters did not cut much ice.

Unfortunately the rackless courage of the ill-armed rebels could not save them from the onslaught of the disciplined troops with their sophisticated firearms and better strategies. No wonder in the later stage of the campaigns the Santals were hunted down and dispersed at many places.

All the same, the British forces took six months to put down the rebellion. The Santals were killed in large numbers as they fought with reckless courage and suicidal obstinacy. Since they found that everything was lost, they did not want to survive and fought recklessly.

Very often the British troops burnt the Santal villages and destroyed whatever they could lay their hands upon. They burnt the grain stores particularly to starve the rebels into submission. Under such pressure some Santals took shelter in the jungles, only to fall a prey to the wild beasts, hunger and exposure.

Already in July 1885 the government had issued a proclamation, asking the Santals to desist from "recklessness and insubordination" and an offer of Rs. 10,000 had been made for the capture of the leader and Rs. 5,000 each for his advisers. The people loyal to the raj had been asked to kill the armed and assembled Santals "as they would be a tiger or a bear". Later the martial law had been proclaimed in early November in the affected areas and certain weapons and the drums of the Santals had been prohibited.

The martial law was withdrawn in Janury 1856. But soon the fugitve Santals plundered some grains on the Monghyr border to keep their body and soul together. Their. leader issued two manifestoes, threatening to plunder and destroy the European factories at Sangrampur.

So the 50th Native Infantry undertook a combing-up operation and the elephants which were returning to Danapur were asked to wait at Bhagalpur. In late January about 290 Santals were arrested.

Ultimately deprived of their leaders and crushed by the troops the Santals gave up the fight. And the search and burn campaign of the troops came to an end.

Meanwhile a special commissioner had been appointed to investigate the origins of the *hool* as well as to restore the peace. Some Calcutta journals, without realising the gravity of the situation, were urging harsh measures against the rebels who seemed to them "blood-thirsty savages" with no respect for age or sex and who deserved banishment to Burma.

Already Kanhu and other leaders had been exceuted after a mock trial at Barhait under the martial law and had become martyrs for their people. Now more than a hundred prisoners were sent to Alipur (Calcutta) under heavy escort. Some of them suffered from cholera and malnutrition, for they could not get acclamatised to the jail life. Some

prisoners escaped, others died.

In all 1251 tribesmen from 52 villages were tried—191 Santals, 34 Nayas, 6 Dhangars (Oraons), 7 Munda, 6 Bhuinyas and others. Those who were of a tender age were flogged and those convicted of cattle lifting were sentenced to one year imprisonment. Murmu Parganait of Motubi, Boran Santal of Phulpahari, Megh Rai Santal of Cartalla and others were charged with rebellion and murder. Mahes Pahari of Tentulcore, Surja Pahari of Dumsea Pahar, Singrae Santal of Sukhapur and others were charged with wilful murder only. Most of these were transported for life and about 200 got varying terms of imprisonment. Shah Suba, Peeroo Manjhi, Otree Manjhi and Champa Manjhi were tried in Birbhum even though they had participated in the revolt in the Bhagalpur district.

Nature

The *hool* was not a spontaneous occurrence. The Santals did not rise in a state of absentmindedness. The mutual consultations of the manjhis and *parganaits* before the event shows that they knew what they were doing. The religious factor was quite pronounced: the *hool* was attributed to a divine command and certain rituals were gone through before and during the rising.

The Santal movement, like the Paharia rising (1756-73), the Rajmahal hills and the Kol Insurrection (1831-32) of Chota Nagpur was indeed directed against the whole alien system which was ruining the Santals. It might not be a 'fanatical' or reckless movement, but there was no dearth of courage. In the words of Major Terves, "It was not war: they did not understand yielding. As long as their national drum beat, the whole party would stand, and allow themselves to be shot down."

It was indeed a mass movement in which some other tribesmen and lower caste Hindus also participated along with the whole Santal population. According to Oldham's report of 1880 it originated in the existence of what Shrefsrud said, in the Santal mind of a dream of good old days of idyllic Champa when as Kherwars they held their lands and woods free, of an expectation that those days would be brought back by some means, and of a chronic yearning for their hope's fulfilment. No wonder the movement gradually drew to itself all those whose patriotism was stimulated by the recollection of their sufferings at the hands of usurers, the police and others. But the fundamental idea at work was the establishment of a Santal realm.

Whenever a usurer fell into the hands of the rebels they showed a a grim humour. They cut off a limb of the victim with the remark that a quarter of the debt had been cleared, another limb accounted for the half, and the cutting of the head meant the full payment. Such atrocities

and remarks had also been common in the course of the Kol Insurrection and the Santals might have borrowed these from the Munda and Oraon rebels to give the political expression of the concept of their golden age.

S. Fuchs called the *hool* a messianic movement. No wonder the village of Sidhu became a sacred place where the Santals flocked to worship the martyr.

An anonymous writer in the *Calcutta Review*, not familiar with the above-mentioned and other rebellions like the Gond rebellion of 1819 and 1842 and the Khonds uprising in the 1830s in Orissa, remarked that it was difficult to find parallel of the *hool* in the history of India or any other country. But in its terrible progress, "in its diabolitical and atrocious scenes of cruelty, the slow roasting of men, even the aged, the torture of children, the ripping of women, the hacking of limbs, the quaffing of blood, the burnings, and the robberies, which marked the Santhal movement, it may compare with the tumultuous proceedings of the demoralized mob in the days of Walpole and George II (1736 A.D.) or the insurrectionary scenes of Carlow and Wexford (A.D. 1798) in Ireland; but with this difference that crimes might have been counted by thousands instead of hundreds of Beerbhoom and Bhaugulpore."

Obviously the idea of a *Hor Raj* was held most strongly wherever the Santals had established the settlements formed out of the forests, for example, in the Damin where the *hool* first began, and generally in the tracts outside to which it extended chequer-wise. In the estates of Giddhaur, and in the large taluks of Karar and others in the Deoghar subdivision where the Santal settlers had taken the places of their Khetauri predecessors, they did not participate in the movement, while in the forest *taluqs* of Narayanpur, where later on the Kharwar movement took roots, they rose and killed the *ghatwal* proprietor, and declared the area their own, even though they were recent immigrants.

Since in the Damin the rebels were recent immigrants, in some cases of not more than sixteen years' standing, they could not have had the notion that the whole area was ancestrally their own. But because here they entirely cleared the land and formed their settlements, they imagined that this was their "promised realm", and that the time for independence had arrived.

The hool of 1856 was thus the expression of the dream of independence. And as soon as the leaders, Sidhu and Kanhu and later his two brothers arrived on the scene, the Santals thought that the hour had come to strike.

The strong arm of the English government conqured the Santals, but could not subdue them. The humiliation of being compelled to continue submitting to the authority rankled in the heart of many Santal patriots until it found vent in the movement of 1871-74.

Aftermath

The uprising of 1855-56 opened the eyes of the government to the oppressions on the Santals. It convinced the government that some administrative measures were needed in the areas inhabited by them. The Act 37 of 1855 created the non-regulation district of the Santal Parganas under the overall control of the Commissioner of Bhagalpur. Like the reorganisation scheme of 1833-34 in the tribal areas of Chota Nagpur, then known as the South-West Frontier Agency, the Santal Parganas were created with a new system of administration. The Deputy Commissioner lived at the district headquarters at Dumka with four Assistant Commissioners and four Sub-Assistant Commissioners under him. These officers were to exercise a paternal control over the Santals. Considerable powers were given to the manjhis, parganaits and others. They first arranged the food for the starving Santals and then gave them seeds for the sowing season. Grain *golas* were opened at Deoghar, Baunsi and Naya Dumka.

The entire regular police was withdrawn from the new district and the subordinate staff of other departments was also withdrawn. The sepoys were ordered not to wander about the countryside to exact provisions. The weights and measures were made uniform to save the Santals from the frauds of the usurers and grocers. The roads, bridges and the postal services were improved.

No law passed by the Governor-General of India in Council could now apply to any part of the new district. The new district of the Santal Parganas included the police jurisdictions of Kahalgaon and Pursa in Bhagalpur and the parganas of Chetowlea, Godda, Hendwe, Jamooni, Kankjole, Pussai, a portion of Sultanabad, Teliagarchi, Ambar, Akbarnagar, Huzur Tuku, Inayatnagar, Mukraen, Sultanganj, Umloo Motea; *tappas* Beputta and Manihari and the whole of Damin-i-Koh including the Rajmahal hills. From the district of Birbhum were taken the *pargana* Darin Moleshwar (northern portion), the *tapas* Hundahit Karaya, Mahmudabad, the *parganas* Moni, Pabia, Haripur and Kukmapur (north of the river More) and the *tappa* Sarath Deoghar. Those portions of the *parganas* of Purnia, Maldah and Murshidabad which lay on the right bank of the Ganges above the village Daunapur in the *pargana* of Kankjole were also included in the district.

Ashley Eden, an officer sympathetic to the Santals, was made the Deputy Commissioner of the new non-regulation district. He and his subordinates were subject to the direction and control of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. Eden drew the Santhal Police Rules known after the Commissioner, George Yule, "Yule's Rules". The Assistant Commissioners were to keep in touch with the Santhals. The village headmen were to be their own police, and professional lawyers were excluded from the courts. Eden was soon replaced by another sympathetic officer,

Rivers Thompson.

Under the new Act the officers appointed in the Santal Parganas would be guided by the spirit and principle of the civil and criminal laws in force in other parts of Bengal, but they would not be bound to take the *fatwa* (ruling) of a law officer. The courts might be held anywhere within the district. In the civil suits involving a dispute over a property of more than one thousand rupees, general laws would apply.

Hazaribagh Phase of the Revolt

According to a letter of the Bhagalpur Commissioner to the Magistrate of Purnia (14 July 1855) the "most serious insurrection" of the Santals in the Damin was joined by their brethren from Birbhum, Hazaribagh and other districts to the South. Even after the emigration of the Santals from their ancient homes of Chai and Champa in the Hazaribagh district, there was a sizeable Santal population there and they were already disturbed by the construction first of the old Banaras Road in the 1780s and by the completion of the Grand Trunk Road in the 1830s and they had seen at close quarters the Kol Insurrection of 1831-32 and the Bhumij Revolt (1832-33).

Now in 1855 when the Santals rose in Damin those in Hazaribagh also revolted for they had been suffering as much as their brethren at the hands of the usurers and speculators, ignoring the tribal customs. Whenever they went to the courts they were fleeced by the lawyers, clerks and others.

So the Santals came to distrust the whole administration of the East India Company and through a whispering campaign organised themselves and rose to a man in 1856. Initially they achieved some success. But unfortunately the local zamindars sided with the government.

At one time 7,000 Santals assembled on the banks of the Barakar. They had run away from the Santal Parganas and wanted to have a new settlement.

As in the Damin the Hazaribagh Santals also turned Rob Roys. Nine Santals and one *parganait* were arrested in a swoop by the police in the Tundi *pargana*. Then in August and September 1855 a detachment of the Ramgrah Light Infantry started to flush out the Santal rebels, because the proclamation of the special commission, offering pardon to those not involved in serious violence, if they surrendered, had no effect.

In October the district authorities put pressure on the zamindars to help in the suppression of the revolt. Steps were taken to prevent the Damin rebels from entering Hazaribagh. The *ghatwals* (watchmen of the passes) were also directed to assist the regular troops. Thus no large scale infiltration took place.

But in January 1856, the Santals were entrenched in the hills near Haren. Robinhood activities continued and the troops remained active.

Then in April, the Deputy Magistrate of Burhee with a small party of Ramgarh Irregular cavalry was defeated by the Santals. A group of sixty Santals were moving about, threatening the loyalists of the British raj. Even long term imprisonment to Ailu Manjhi and Hari Manjhi had no effect and the Santals continued to plunder the Kharakdiha *pargana*. The *guendas* (spies) were suspected of double dealings by the authorities ; for they often exaggerated the facts about the rebels to enhance the rewards they expected. That is why Karu Suba of Birbhum was still active in this area and an offer of Rs. 200 for the apprehension of Gora Manjhi of Birbhum had no effect.

The local zamindars were asked to send the wounded Santals of the different encounters to elicit some useful information from them. Besides, a reward of Rs. 100 each was offered for the apprehension of Booka; Goree and other Santals.

New pressure was put on the "marauding parties of Santals and all blacksmiths found manufacturing areas were put under police survelliance. The zamindars were asked to keep an eye on these manufacturers.

Effort was also made to restore confidence among the Santals with the co-operation of the *tikaits* (chiefs) of the area. Food for work programme for the Santals was started for those who were not involved in dacoities, murders, etc.

In late May, many detachments of troops were deployed in Kharakdiha and the *ghatwals* and the regular police were asked to be more vigilant. Efforts were made to locate the headquarters of the rebels and before the onset of the monsoon they were not to be given a "resting place" so they were "continually hunted down".

Even so, *bania* (grocer) shops in the villages of Katmonjee, Buliance and Habiagarh were looted ; and the rebel leaders could not be arrested.

Later Bhairo Manjhi, a "dangerous character" was arrested and sent for sessions trial. The informer Teknarayan Singh was rewarded and the people whose property Bhairo had looted, were asked to identify their article. In August 1856 Bhairo Manjhi, Rattai Manjhi, Sham Manjhi, Pithu Manjhi, Siten Manjhi and others were tried as 'criminals' but nobody bothered to know why they had taken the law into their hands.

It was only by the end of 1876 that the Santals of Ramgarh, Palganj and the neighbouring areas were reported to be quiet and busy in agricultural pursuits. However, a close watch was kept on one Ganesh Manjhi.

Even as late as April 1857 the Assistant Commissioner of Hazaribagh was referring to the problem of usury in Kharakdiha sub-division against which the Santals represented. It was a pity that the Act XXVIII of 1855 fixing the rate of interest at 6 per cent in the whole of the Chota Nagpur division had not been properly enforced in this area. Meghrai

Manjhi and others complained that the *mahajans* were charging 50 per cent interest and extracting twice the grain lent to them two years back. They alleged that they were dispossessed of the land they had cleared from the jungle. Special powers were needed to protect these poor Santals. In view of the unrest, the Assistant Commissioner ordered the investigation into these oppressions : "the late disturbances demand that such complaints should not be overlooked or their grievances left unredressed."

In May 1857, the presence in Hazaribagh of Mahtab Narayan Singh, a grandson of Chet Singh, a former Raja of Banaras who had revolted against the British in Warren Hasting's time created some suspicion among the authorities. The "most suspicious feature in the self-styled Raja's proceedings in Hazaribagh" were his visiting some Santal manjhis in the disturbed parganas of Jagesaipur gola bordering the old Banaras-Calcutta Trunk Road and his meeting with Kailu Manjhi of Garaballi, Lema Manjhi of Buladi, Mahesh Manjhi of Dudh Mati and Bansi Manjhi of Bensidih. Investigations were made regarding Singh's movements.

There is some connection between the rebellion of Santhalia and Birbhum and that of Hazaribagh. Many Santals had gone to fight in the Santhalia and many from Birbhum who had taken part in that rebellion later came to Hazaribagh. In any case, the old contact between several families of the two areas was there. The oppressions of the *mahajans* were galling to the Santals or both the areas. True, the Hazaribagh rebellion was more agrarian, but the general socio-economic causes were the same and the *modus operandi* of the Santals was also similar.

The Santal rebels had a few initial successes here and there but their bows and arrows could not face the British guns. The rebels were hounded from jungle to jungle, often sandwitched between British forces. Many Santal villages were burnt and their properties destroyed. Even Santal women were imprisoned.

The Santals during the Revolt of 1857 and After

Even though the Revolt of 1857 did not generally draw the Santals of the Santal Parganas to the struggle as they were fresh from the Revolt of 1855-56 but they were vigilant.

But in Chota Nagpur, the Santals played a significant role. The Santal rising in 1857 followed the mutiny of the Ramgarh battalion at Hazaribagh. The Santals wanted to grab this opportunity of recovering their good old world. Not only the Santals of Hazaribagh but also of Manbhum joined the revolt and wrecked vengeance on the non-tribal oppressors as well as on the government machinery.

In September 1857, Rangi Manjhi led a group of Santals, plundered several villages and murdered a man in Mandu in the Hazaribagh

district. The British troops as a reprisal burnt this Manjhi's house and arrested two Santals. At Hogoo on the road to Ramgarh 300 Santals surrounded the house of Krishna Mahato, but a party of *Sawars* dispersed them. At Jhurpo about 300 Santals attacked Lieutenant Graham's party and wounded some of his men. These Santals under Ragho Manjhi had for some time been attacking the rich and oppressive non-tribals.

In the Govindpur sub-division in the Manbhum district, the Santals were agitated because of the scarcity of food. According to E.T. Dalton, the Commissioner, the most disturbed tract of the Chota Nagpur division was the one between Gola of the Ramgarh district and Chass near Purulia where the Santals were on the war path, levying contributions and punishing the rapacious landholders and others. Only when Major English marched into this area were the pacified.

A large number of Santals assembled near Jaipur in the Manbhum district in late September and engaged Lt. Graham. Later after Captain Montgomery's operations they lay low for some time. When Dalton planned to exist the tribals to a special corps very few Santals joined it.

In the later part of the revolt of 1857 in Chota Nagpur the Bhogtas, the Hos and other tribesmen became more prominent than the Santals. But stray cases of attacks by the Santals on non-tribals continued. In January 1858, for example, the house of one Hardayal Sahu in *pargana* Rampur was plundered. By April 1858 Reaves was speculating that the Santals would eventually make better soldiers than the Mundas and others. But he put rides : "They are however very wild and impatient of control and to ensure them to the trammels of discipline requires great management and temper."

The Post-hool Development in the Santal Parganas

William Robinson, the Deputy Commissioner in 1858, made a simple code of simple rules. But in 1863, the Advocate-General gave "an erroneous" opinion that the provisions of the Act XXXVII of 1855 that "no law which shall hereafter be passed by the Governor-General of India-in-Council shall be deemed to extend to any part of the said district unless the same shall be especially named therein" was *ultra vires.* So the general laws began to be applied to the Santal Parganas. A revised set of rules was published in 1863. The Santals began to be dispossessed of their land under the cover of the provisions of the Act X of 1859. And the professional lawyers began to be admitted to the cases involving the Santals. The londlords once again claimed overlordship over the lands cleared by the Santals and rack-rented them. The money-lenders also became active. The rent-free lands of the village-priests and others were being seized, breaking up the village community system so much cherished by the Santals.

Under the Deputy Commissioner Brown Wood (1860-73) the Santal Parganas relapsed to the old regulation system meant for the plain areas of the Bengal Presidency. Rack-renting by the zamindars began and the village headmen (manjhis) were turned out from their land and from their official positions and replaced by the strangers.

In the words of Carstairs, the Santal village paid its rent through the manjhi who, as the founder, or the founder's representative was its chief, and could no more be divorced from it than the father can be from his family. But the landlords had now begun to put up the office of the manjhi for sale, as if it had been a tendency created by them, and the Santal villages began to be bought and sold by the *dikku* speculators who were thrust upon the villages as their temporary owners and took undue advantage of their position, making things unpleasant for the Santal tenants.

The penal code was introduced in 1862, and the Stamp Act in 1863 and the Civil Procedure Code (Act VIII of 1859) was re-introduced in 1863, requiring the courts to decree debts and the high rate of interest charged by the moneylenders. The rules of George Yule, limiting the interest to 25 per cent, was ignored and readmission of professional lawyers into the cases of the Santals revived the old problems for the poor, ignorant Santals.

The Santals who could not face the hardships like the famine of 1874 when there was no relief work or the food for work programme in contrast to the plains areas of Bengal, became restless.

The Kherwar Movement

The alarm sounded again from the Santal hamlets in 1871. The Santals of Dumka and Goda subdivisions collected with tumultuous appeals before the British officers and organised great hunting parties in the jungles. If the main grievance in the *hool* had been the oppressions of the usurers, the police and law courts under the protective umbrella of the British rule, and the storm-centre had been the Damin, now the grievance was against the landlords, and the disturbance was mainly in the non-Damin area. Once more the drums rumbled in every village and it was rumoured that the Santals were out for another *hool.* At one place the Santals in a large number shouted in the Santali language, threatening to deal with the *hakims* (higher British authorities) as harshly as they had dealt with the *ghatwals.* This phase of the movement was called the *Sapha Hor* (pure man) or the Kherwar movement. The Kherwars were a sort of a puritan sect of the Santals like the Wahabis among the Muslims who had plans for an independent raj.

The Kherwarism

The Kherwarism of Chota Nagpur (especially Hazaribagh) was in

many respects dissimilar to that of the Santal Parganas in its origins and its aims, even though there were some common facts.

The real Kherwar movement, said A. Campbell in his letter to the *Statesman* of Calcutta (24 November 1880), was political, if it was anything at all, but in Chota Nagpur it was by and large socio-religious in character, with a dash of some political elements.

In the Santal Parganas, the Santals organised large meetings and complained to the Deputy Commissioner against the zamindars. The oppressions were said to represent a divine wrath for abandoning the worship of God and for venerating instead the minor gods and evil spirits. A radical change of heart and the revival of the old form of worship could make them once more the undisputed masters of this area. Thus even though initially a religious movement, it soon assumed political overtones.

Leadership

Once again the Santals of the Santal Parganas had a charismatic messianic leader in Bhagrit (Bhagirath) Manjhi of Taldiha. He announced in 1871 that he was a religious teacher (*babaji*). He had studied in a Christian school, but he was more influenced by Hinduism than by Christianity. He gave audience to his devotees in the morning, hearing their complaints and assuring them redress of their grievances by the grace of God. The *babaii* claimed to be a prophet, an intermediary between the supernatural and the material world. The devotees brought to him a leaf full of rice, some milk in a water-pot, some betel-nut and the smallest copper-coin. They were also to become strict vegetarians and teatotallers and killed all their fowls and pigs. According to the *Bhagalpur Administration Report* of 1877-78, Bhagirath's influence on a large section of the Santals was very great. He was looked upon as their spiritual head as well as their adviser in matters temporal. It was only because he was fully aware of the strength of the English government, he did not launch on open fight against it. Initially the Santals came to him for the cure of all diseases and frailties and he was supposed to provide a panacea for all the ills. But gradually a political dimension was added to his teachings.

Nature

In view of the unrest the scheme of demarcating the government forests in the Damin had to be abandoned. The prices in the Dumka bazar fell by 50 per cent only in a few days when the rumblings of the movement were audible. Protest meetings were held; grievances were aired before the local officers, especially on their rent question. The Santals planned to march to Dumka and to Bhagalpur. During the 1872 Census operations the Santals of the sub-division of Naya Dumka and

Pakur showed some uneasiness as to their children being counted. In the Godha-Doman area the feeling was stronger and the Extra Assistant Commissioner there apprehended a serious uprising. Rumours were circulating that many Santals would be taken from each village and sent to Assam or the Bhutan *duars* (*dwars*) to work as coolies in clearing fresh lands or in the tea gardens. It was also rumoured in some areas that the people were counted as they would be put in the list of forcible conversion to Christianity. No wonder the people of Boarijor drove the parganait and the manjhi who were assisting the census staff, blocking the work of the census. The Extra Assistant Commissioner had to face an assembly of about 1,500 people with their women and children "in real terror lest some mysterious evil should come upon them" if they were counted. With great difficulty they were persuaded to disperse and the crisis was averted. But they reiterated their resolve that they would not like to be counted.

The opening of the loop line of the East Indian Railway, which had been under construction at the time of the *hool*, and the chord line in 1866 changed the mental horizon of the Santals. Many of them unable to face the trials and tribulations of their new existence, started migrating to other areas for greener pastures.

In 1874 at a mammoth meeting at Bounsi, Bhagirath of Jaldia was proclaimed a King and he began realising the land revenue. The same year when rice was imported from Burma to feed the famine-stricken Santals Bhagirath and his followers declared that the *Sahebs* (Englishmen) were afraid and this rice was the same as formerly offered by the Santals to the *bongas* (spirits).

One day Bhagirath with his several thousand followers appeared on a hillside opposite the camp of the Deputy Commissioner Boxwell at Pirpaiti. There was a general panic but the Deputy Commissioner summoned him to his camp, summarily tried and convicted him and forworded him through the back door to Bhagalpur. And the Santals were somehow pacified.

Until his death in 1879 Bhagirath remained the leader of the advanced liberals. He advocated radicalism, pure and simple. He had a negative syllogism on which he based his political creed : No man had created the earth or sends rains and sunshine, "no human being has cleared or ploughed our land, but ourselves"; so "no human being but ourselves has the right to a share in the produce." This caught the imagination of his followers.

The means by which Bhagirath wanted to liberate his people from their present bondage was to worship with great the principal goddess of the Hindus Singhbahini. For this devotion his followers were to forsame all other deities and to do away with all unclean animals. So the pigs and fowls were slaughtere to appease this Hindu goddess. Drinking and

dancing were abolished. Only one of their former gods, Chando, was allowed to be worshipped, for the Santals generally regarded this deity as the creator and preserver of all.

Under the new sect, the devotee was to worship three times—daily, weekly and annually. The new deity was to be offered sugar, *ghee*, sweetmeats and flowers by the devotees who must have bathed. On Wednesdays her worship was to be done in a special way and in the annual worship a goat and a pair of pigeons were to be sacrificed to her.

Eventually three sects developed among the Kherwars—(a) the purists (real *Sapha Hors*) who worshipped no other god than Singhbahini and the sun, and abstained altogether from drinking and dancing; (b) the *fakirs* or *Babajis* who wandered about and begged for alms; (c) the half-hearted or the Bhelwaragars who joined all the observances of the other two sects, but retained their old gods and substituted sweetmeats, etc., for the pigs and fowls at the orthodox Santal festivals, and preserved the traditional drinking and dancing. Some Kherwars also worshipped Kali and Mahadeva (Shiva) and invoked to names of Ganga and *Dharati* (earth).

The purists and the *fakirs* buried their dead, and carried a handful of earth from the graves to the Ganges, instead of taking a bone of the departed to their holy river, the Damodar. The Bhelwaragars, however, continued the traditional practice of cremation.

The more devoted ones were also said to be favoured with revelations from "Aiyo-Baba" (mother and father) Thakur and Thakran, the God and his consort, who promised them ultimate success. The initiated ones claimed the gift of writing and circulated scraps of paper with some signs which they deciphered. For other purposes they had scribes. They hoped that as soon as these sects numbered twelve, the Kherwarian millenium would dawn. In case the zamindars and the *hakims* (higher authorities) did not grant the Santals liberty, they would decimate them as they had cleared the forests.

There was a general alarm among the non-tribals, whenever the Santals beat their drums to scare the tiger, it was taken as a call for an armed rising and the non-tribals fled with their families and movable property.

The Lieutenant-Governor, George Campbell, a non-Regulation man from the Punjab, brought up in the John Lawrence school there, put some good influence on the Santal Commission and revived the spirit of Yule's rules. Campbell impressed upon the government that the record of rights in the Santal Parganas was a must, otherwise soldiers would be needed to shoot these simple people. Thus the area was once more removed from the operation of the general regulations as the provisions of the Section I of the Act 33 Vie-Cap 3 were extended to it, and a regulation for the peace and good government of the district was passed into a

law as Regulation III of 1872, giving the Lieutenant-Governor the power to appoint officers for the survey and settlement in the Santal Parganas. This was supposed to be the *Magna Carta* of the Santals.

But in many of the 8,000 villages the Santals refused to co-operate in the settlement operations conducted by Brown Wood from 1873 to 1879. Even so, these exercises were completed after Bhagirath Manjhi and Gyan Parganait were arrested. There was also some resistance to the payment of the rent by the peasants. As late as 1891 the numbering of the houses during the census of 1891 was opposed.

The Kherwars were numerous in the northern parts of Sultanabad and in the Pakur raja's estate. But gradually in other areas like Godda and Rajmahal subdivisions also their number increased. A few became active in the Purulia area in Chota Nagpur around 1876, where Dulae Manjhi became their leader. According to Oldham, however, this leader was Dubia Gosain of Palgaon in Hazaribagh and not Dulae.

The movement was on the face of it socio-religious, but in fact it was political in nature, for it aimed at independence. It was a revivalist movement aimed at the revitalisation of the society.

In 1879, the movement was revived, for the piecemeal measures taken by the government did not satisfy the Santals. The first signs were visible in the neighbourhood of Bhagirath's residence even though he was living a retired life after his release from the jail in 1877. The movement then spread to the east of Pakur portion of the Damin. The new leader was a villager manjhi named Bhajrai (Bagh Rai) who had a scribe named Takhem who sent long petitions at intervals to the district authorities, criticising bitterly the administrative machinery. The forest policy of the government involving the conservation of the trees was attacked. Even the proposed settlement of the Paharias in some areas was opposed.

The political agitator Bhajrai had at one time led an agrarian protest and had been imprisoned. Now he was asking his people to resist the census operation of 1881, claiming exemption for the Santals throughout the Pakur Damin-i-Koh. He also instigated some Paharias to repudiate the settlement which they had accepted.

Some other lesser leaders also emerged in some areas, declaring themselves the devotees of Bhagirath. Calling themselves *Babajis* they received presents. Some of them were Hindus, for example, one who called himself Chand Santal and set up an *ashram*, in Rajmahal in 1877, was a Hindu.

Another leader of note was Dub or Dubia Gosain (Babaji) who mainly operated among the Santals of Hazaribagh. He first spent some time in the Santal Parganas and obtained some first-hand knowledge of the Santal character and also of Kherwarism. Then he travelled through several areas where the Santals were located. His austerities attracted the attention of the Santals. Then he set up an *ashram* at Jagesar a few

miles south of Hazaribagh, which had already been in turmoil in 1855-57. He had three suitable agents, one of whom was a former policeman and a literate person. All sorts of rumours were spread and the people believed in the supernatural powers of the Babaji.

In 1880-81, the Kherwars tried their best to revive a tribal administration. The sub-divisional officers of Dumka was besieged in his tent by a huge group of Santal agitators, shouting for the whole night. This was followed by the burning down of the sub-divisional headquarters at Jamtara. At Katikund Gosserat, the officer in chage of the census was suddenly taken prisoner. The enumeration of the houses and men at night was suspect in the Santal eyes.

Only when a body of military police was posted in the district and a field force of 4,500 cavalry and infantry marched through the affected areas did the situation come under control.

According to Nandlal Chatterjee, Dubia was from Lucknow where he was later confined in house arrest, hankering to go back to the Santals once again.

According to the Census Report of 1881, the disturbances which took place in the Santal Parganas prior to the final enumeration of the Census of 1881 had the effect of drawing back to their homes many Santals who were serving outside. So compared to the 1872 census the population increased by 20 per cent.

But the emigration of Santals to the tea gardens of Assam, Cachar, Duars, etc. as well as to the mines, which began after the *hool* (1855) and the Revolt of 1857 continued in the second half of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth centuries.

Like Bhagirath, Dubia had devotees who took his mantle and continued his work in the various Santal pockets. At the village called Junatpur in the Jartal taluq, about 20 miles north-west of Dumka, such a devotee in association with a scribe, a Bhuinya named Tribhuwan, set up an *ashram* and spread innumerable unsigned letters with a message of the brotherhood of the Santals, asking them to chant the deity's name everyday. They were also asked to resist the census.

A former constable or a Sepoy Karu had in 1865 declared himself a Thakur for which he had been imprisoned. His followers offered him a kid and one ruppee each.

According to the Chota Nagpur Commissioner's report of 4 May 1881, in October 1880 an attempt was made to extend the Kherwar movement to the Santals of the Govindpur subdivision of the Manbhum district and the Giridih subdivision of the Hazaribagh district. Letters said to contain the will of the Hindu godness Lakshmi were sent, forbidding the people under threats of danger to themselves, not to plough with kins and not to plough on Sundays. The letters had come from Dubia Gosain, but it was rumoured that they came from two sacred Hindu

places of pilgrimage—Baidyanathdham (Deoghar) or Banaras in Uttar Pradesh.

The Assistant Commissioner of Govindpur reported on 4 January 1881 that the Kherwarism in his area was different from that of the Santal Parganas. Its political element was seen in the fact that white goats, presumably symbolising the white people, were to be killed here. The Santals were promised a reduction of the rent by Dubia. Thus it was a land agitation.

In the Hazaribagh subdivision also the land question was raised by the Kherwars, though the religious dimension was retained. According to a report by Eattray, the Santals would not be stirred up so much by a religious question ; the land question was at the bottom of the movement. The Santals hoped that the Babaji's promises would be fulfilled and their rents reduced. In Palganj their rents had recently been raised. In some Santal villages bordering the Monghyr district also the rents had been increased. Other villages feared the same fate. So the Babaji's assurance gave them some hope and a political credo was built on a simple promise. The stories of Dubia's miracles spread like a wildfire. In the same way as Sidhu and Kanhu had done in 1855, Dubia Gosain sent small scraps of paper with some instructions on written them, from village to village. People were thus asked to assemble before the Babaji at once. Verbal messages were also passed, ordering the slaughter of all the pigs and fowls, the forsaking of the old deities, the giving up of drinking and dancing, and a general conforming to the usages of the Hindus.

The Santals were threatened with calamities if they refused to conform to the new order of things. To enforce obedience the agents quoted the instances of many who had suffered already.

If everything went well by the Hindu festival of *dashahara* the raj would be made over to the followers of the Babaji. There would be no more rack-renting and other forms of oppression on the Hor. The rent of as much land as could be ploughed by a pair of buffaloes would be one rupee only and that by a pair of bullocks eight annas only. The *mahajans* were threatened that they would be cut to size in the new realm.

The Santals had a very old tradition of a deluge of fire-rain. So when they were threatened with a similar calamity if they harboured unclean animals, they believed it. Naturally enough, almost every village extirpated the pigs and fowls. During the *Dashahara* festival they kept their cattle indoors.

Gradually, Kherwarism spread throughout the area of the Santals. A few English officers tried to belittle this movement, saying that it was not so much 'patriotic enthusiasm' as the fear element which helped this great revolution. But behind the effort to imitate the Hindu customs there was a definite urge on the part of the Santals to better their lot and to get rid of the alien rule,

In the Santal Parganas, the element of patriotism was more pronounced and the movement was more compact. In Chota Nagpur, on the other hand, Kurmis or Kunbis were allowed to join Kherwarism.

Singhbahini was worshipped in both the areas. In Hazaribagh also milk, rice, flour and *ghee* were offered to the Hindu *sadhu* (saint). The beating of drums by the Santals in the village fairs and before the Hindu temple was forbidden. But sometimes the Brahmanas were employed to perform certain ceremonies.

Dubia's influence spread from Hazaribagh to the Deoghar and Jamtara jurisdictions and to the border of the Dumka sub-division. To these areas Bhagirath's influence did not generally spread. In the Jamatara taluq, pargana Pabia, the most praminent leader was Gulia arrested and convicted.

In spite of the show of force in both the Santal Parganas and Chota Nagpur the parganaits and the manjhis shouted when the census programme was being finalised : "We are Kherwar Rajas" ; "We are now Kherwar Babus" ; "We are our own *hakims*"; "We obey no [other] hakim's orders."

One of the bad aspects of the Kherwar movement was that the Santals neglected their cultivation work and took to *ganja* smoking. Bhagirath himself smoked *ganja* and the followers imitated him. Besides, the old *Jhotaha* Santals and the new *Safa Hor* (Kherwar Sadhus) were not on good terms. The pigs and fowls of the former were being killed against their wishes, while the latter were insulted and jeered at for not sticking to the traditional food habits. The two groups could not inter-marry. The Safas constituted one-eighth of the population of the Santal Parganas.

According to Cosserat, the Kherwars did not pay their rents. At times they refused to do so until the zamindars could convince them that there was a world in between ours and the heaven.

The Kherwar movement greatly checked the work of the Christian missionaries in the Santhalia. In any event a Santal Christain could not assert his conversion with pride as a Kherwar could.

During the famines of 1889 and 1896, the Kherwars were active once again. During the 1891 census a few Santals were punished for resisting the numbering of houses. Carstairs calls them "a strangely spiritual people". He met an old Kherwar who had given up eating fowls and drinking *pachai* or *Hanria*, their traditional drinks, but presumably because he was too much tired and dejected, he no longer wanted to take the British Raj. Carstairs saw two other Santals of the old type with shaggy top-knots, who were the disciples of one Jesai Ram, a well-known hermit living in the Godda hills, who often sent unsolicited some good advice to the deputy commissioner of the Santal Parganas. In 1907 many Babajis were seen running instead of walking in the South Santal Parganas to

impress the necessity of haste to his disciples. They also acted as excorcists.

The census reports of 1911 and 1921 mention the existence of some Kherwars. In 1911 the Santal Parganas had 1,300 Kherwars P.O. Bodding found several in 1921. Two decades latter the Kherwars played a significant role during the Quit India Movement. Under Lal Hembrom and Paiks Manjhi they damaged the telegraph line and bridges in the Santal Parganas and picketed the liquor shops, and many *Sapha Hors* were arrested by the police.

According to the Census report of India (1921), the distress of famine in 1918-19 led to a marked fillip to the Kherwar movement in the Santal Parganas. Now the Kherwars had begun worshipping the Hindu deity Ram. Besides the Babaji group there were two more—the *Saphai* and the *Samra*. The word *Saphai* was a variation of *Sapha*. Samra was the name of a village in the Godda subdivision in which the *guru* of this group lived. The latter had adopted some new rituals besides the sacrifice of a fowl and a pig and given up the worship of the *bongas*.

Haribaba and Other Mevements in Chota Nagpur

The Santals of the Chota Nagpur division had earlier participated in the national movement under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1930 Sangam Manjhi of Borobera in the Hazaribagh district started a reformist movement was similar to the Kherwar movement. The followers asked to wear the sacred thread and to keep clean and avoid meat and liquor. Besides, probably under Gandhiji's influence they were asked to shun mill-made clothes and to use Khadi. Prominent Congress leaders attended their full-moon night meetings.

A large number of Santals joined this new sect of Bongaism. They stopped paying the *chaukidari* tax and they respected the Congress flag and danced around the pole flying this flag. They believed that the bullets of the government soldiers would be harmless like water. But on 4 July 1930 Bongum Manjhi was arrested and charged with inciting his people against the British raj.

Another leader Silu Santal (Tarachand) rose at Rajbasa in Sarangpur police station on Dalbhum in Chota Nagpur. He allowed his followers to take only their own drinks, *pachai* and eat crabs and snails.

Mango leaves were circulated as far as Mayurbhanj, asking the Santals to assemble at Rajbasa for planning a revolution. On 15 May 1931 a large number of Santals did assemble there to pull down the telegraph line to show their 'independence'. In spite of the order of the authorities not to perform the *charak-puja* (hook-swinging), Tarachand did it, saying that he did not care for the British soldiers for he had with him a large force without uniforms to whom the guns would not do any harm.

Tarachand was arrested, but the Santals living as far as the Santal Paraganas, believed that the *swaraj* would come within a couple of years.

When Dukha Ho (Hari Baba) started a new cult, he came in touch with Tarachand and his disciple Jayachand Santal of Dalbhum. They planned a mass meeting with Gandhiji's blessings to restore the condition prevailing before the British raj.

Tarachand assembled about four thousand tribesmen in the Kherawan state and got timber from the Government reserve forest for constructing a temple complex.

Tarachand was arrested on 25 July. But Jaichand's followers beat up the police. This was followed by the arrest of eleven people including Jaichand by the British troops and the dismantling of the newly constructed temple complex.

Conclusion

The Santal Movement—both the phases—was a nostalgic harking back to an innocent old age. It was a social turmoil. It was a people's struggle on a mass scale. S.B. Chaudhury's sweeping generation that the rebellions of pre-1857 were "anti-colonial movements running through feudal channels" cannot apply to the Santal movement.

The origins of the Santal movement lay in the break-up of the Santal society and economy which were in a shambles. The general ignorance on the part of the officers and men of the colonial government of the Santal rights and customs, except in the case of a few sympathetic officers, brought about the ruin of the Santals. Even when the general regulations were withdrawn from the Santal areas, no serious effort was made to blunt the claws of the usurers, landlords and traders. The agrarian disaffection was the result.

It is time we avoid old clinches about the Santals. A new formulation on their movement is necessary. It is true that their two major movements in the nineteenth century do not fit into the integrated national movement of India, but there is no doubt that they foresaw many aspects of the national movement like the no-rent compaign. And in the 1930s and 1940s the Santal movement merged into the Indian freedom struggle.

Every phase of the Santal movement partly succeeded in obtaining a recognition of the special position of the Santals, even though this revitalisation movement did not fully succeed in revitalising the Santal society and the messianic leadership failed in recreating the old scenario where men were justly treated.

The Santal movement, like any other millenary or populist movement was a cry "for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors, a vague dream of some curb upon them, a righting of individual wrongs." But there is no doubt that it had some unique features.

In the present study those special features have been pinpointed. The Santal movement represented a transitional phase when the Santals had not yet acclimatised to the new colonial situation. It was a protest against the new system which was badly encroaching upon the traditional Santal village system. If the first phase (the *hool*) was a violent protest, the second one (the Kherwar movement) was by and large peaceful. The rebels were keen to reconstruct a society based on tribal solidarity.

The Santal movement had a lot of lessons for the publicmen and administrators and the students of public administration, history, political science, sociology and anthropology. The causes and implications of the movement show that it was a tragic conflict, a hopeless struggle against a powerful system. It was a defensive movement, a symbol of despair.

13

RAMPA REBELLION

No mass uprising or revolt in the annals of Indian resistance to British Raj, cost the latter in the univided Madras presidency in terms of men, resources military equipments and strategy so much as the Rampa Rebellion under the leadership of Sri Rama Razu did in the hilly areas of the Rampa sub-division of the Agency Tracts in the modern Andhra Pradesh between 1922 and 1924. Rampa Rebellion was a political struggle in which Sri Rama Razu organised the Tribal people in Vizag Agency against British rulers. The Rampa armed rebellion was the reaction to the atrocities committed by the British Police officials on the poor and innocent Tribals inhabiting Agency tracts.

On account of this rebellion, led by Alluri Sri Rama Razu that North Godavari, Vizagapatnam and areas bordering on modern Orissa state between including Srikakulam had become the scene of veritable guerrilla warfare between 1922-24. The British Government was crual towards the brave tribals and used all the modern weapons and killed thousands of these unfortunate tribesmen. This revolt appeared to be an isolated one at a time when the country was well on the road to non-violent non-co-operation. Its importance consisted in the fact that it was led by this great and remarkable personality "Sri Rama Razu", still worshipped as a hero in his home districts, but almost unknown elsewhere."

The rebellion commenced initially with a series of successful raids on police stations to secure fire arms by Sri Rama Razu, ultimately developed into a mighty guerilla war. The Rampa rebels were able to defy the Malabar Special Police and the Assam rifles for nearly two years. "They (rebels) were fish in water who enjoyed the sympathy and support of local hill population over an area of about 2,500 square miles." The rebel force headed by Alluri, at that time numbered not more than hundred. They shouted "Bandemataram", attacked by using violence the police stations. This cost the then Madras Government Rs. 15 lakhs by March 1924. The Government had to spend so much in terms of military preparation, installations of wireless sets and extra telephone lines for communication purposes, tract detecting equipment, transport

and large medical expenditure and personnel.

During the debate in the Madras Legislative Council on additional allotment in connection with Rampa Fituri, for which the Government was pressing, there was much heated exchange between the Government and the non-official member C.V.S. Narasimha Raju, M.L.C. The non-official member charged the Government for police inefficiency in handling the Rampa situation for two years with all the resources of the Madras Government having been drained. C.V.S. Narasimha Raju observed that "Government have not been able to suppress the so called rebellion of 100 men in the Fituri. There are 700 police workers in that area with almost 30 officers and already over Rs. 13 lakhs have been sunk in this undertaking by March 1924. (C.V.S. Narasimha Raju), Further charged that when once the rebels were actually within *six miles* of the Police Camp, this foece which has cost over Rs. 13 lakhs could not chase and face them in an engagement." It was again charged that "the number of the rebels never exceeded 100. To put down a rebellion raised by 100 persons, as many as seven times the number of police force were employed and still it was admitted that it was not successful even after a two years' operation, and any, allotment for expenditure on special police served no purpose.

Sri Rama Razu's inspiring leadership, and remarkable military skill and amazing organizing ability of high order, converted the poor, impoverished and exploited Koya tribal population into mighty rebels. The movement started as an uprising and spread to the hilly tracts. He mobilised these simple tribal folks and trained them for armed resistance and unfolded a campaign to seize fire arms and ammunition. Under his radiance this revolt grew into a protracted armed struggle, unlike the uprisings of the hill tribes of the earlier years. Razu provided them necessary guidance and turned these inarticulate tribes men, subjected to inhuman treatment by the British Officials into mighty Guerrilla fighters and kept the British authorities restless for more than two years. Coming in the wake of the non-co-operation, the Rampa armed resistance was part of the anti-imperialist struggle waged by the National Congress against British rule in India. Razu fought the British in guerrilla pattern.

Rampa Rebellion or the Rebellion of the Agency Tracts in the Andhra Pradesh was a major revolt of the tribal population based on genuine grievances against the wooden and unimaginative bureaucracy. The British Government found it difficult to prevent the influence of this movement spread to other parts. Rampa Fituri became the pressing political issue shaking the British regime in then Madras Presidency and its leader Alluri Sri Rama Razu was a nightmare to the British authorities in the agency area. The alarming situation and development in the agency nesessitated drastic action.

The Agency Tracts constituting under the British Raj, the hilly, undeveloped and inaccessible (forest) tracts of Godhavari, Vizagapatnam and Ganjam were inhabited by the primitive tribes like Koyas, the Kond Doras and the Kondhs. "Rampa Rebellion was the struggle of that locality involving the poor peasant and lower strata of rural society and the tribals against the forest policy of the British colonial state."

The upsurge of the simple-minded tribals after an effective stirring had come to acquire massive diamensions. Sri Rama Razu become the undisputed leader of these tribal patriots. Razu's activities among the tribal posed a challange to the British authority. The Government's intelligent report stated that Razu was toying with the idea of seizeure of power from the British and become master of the region.

Born on 4th July 1897 at Mogallu, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh, of a middle class Kshatriya family, Sri Rama Razu was the son of Venkata Ramana Razu and Surya Narayanamma.

Razu had a disturbed school career and had his schooling in several places including Rajamundry, Ramachandrapuram, Cocanada, Vizagapatnam, Narasapet and Tuni. He had little inclination towards studies while at school, but Razu attained outside his school, high proficiency in English language and Sanskrit. Added to this. he had deep interrest in horse-riding and astrology and study of native medicine and medical herbs. In the progress report while in Vizagapatnam he is shown as clever in gymnastics. Razu was more philosophically oriented in that young age. He began practising yoga and at the age of 18 became a Sanyasi. His ascetic appearance in that young age impressed everyone.

As yogi Razu wandered in the entire tribal areas of the Agency Tracts in the Vizagapatnam and Godavari Districts since 1915 and dedicated himself to the service of the innocent and simple people who were subjected to exploitation and ill-treatment by the British officials and local plains men. He commenced his social work among these poor uneducated tribal folks with redressal of local grievances. Early 1921 Sri Rama Razu came under the spell of non-co-operation movement. Gandhiji's message of non-co-operation fascinated him. He propagated in keeping with Gandhiji's precepts against drink evil and advocated panchayat system. His hold on the tribal population was such that he pursuaded them to live in peace with neighbouring folks and fellow-human beings, solve their local problems, settle their disputes through Panchayat and avoid law courts. Razu's efforts, therefore, were directed towards the introduction of village Panchayats. His popularity among the tribals was unparalled. He wore khadi. He was simple and austers in his habits. His simplicity together with his knowledge in astrology besides his magnetic personality impressed the poor tribal population of that area —inhabited mostly by the Koya tribes. His ascetic life and his readiness to takeup their cause drew the poor Koyas who turned to him in consi-

derable number. These poor and simple folks believed that Razu was endowed with some divine powers and they worshipped him like a diety or "Devudu". They naturally looked to Sri Rama Razu for leadership and Rama Razu took up their cause in fighting the misdeeds of the sub-magistrate and his henchmen to which they were subjected. Razu began to exercise tremendous influence between Krishna—his native district and the Agency Tracts. His name had become quite familiar in the Southern villages.

Already Razu was interested in the movement for Indian Independence. The bitter memories of Jallian Walla Bagh remained fresh in his thought. Naturally his hatred for the British Imperialists was taking formal shape.

Raju's activities among the tribals and his advocacy of Panchayat system aroused suspicion in the British Government authorities. They kept his activities and movements under surveillance. Razu was removed from the place called Krishnadevapettah to Paidupettah where he was given a piece of land for cultivation. Thoughts of Swaraj and the overthrow of the British Imperialist regime began to occupy his mind in a major way.

Sri Rama Razu by his good conduct and gentle behaviour, with his reputation for godliness among the local hill-men created confidence in the mind of the assistant commissioner of Agency, Razu made the authorities believe that he was quite harmless. During the brief period of his stay, he had acquired reputation for semi-divine position at Paidupettah ; (Razu) his good conduct induced Fas-ul-lah, the Assistant Commissioner of Rampa Agency to grent him the passport to visit Nepal on a pilgrimage. The former could not refuse it to Sri Rama Razu and the latter was permitted to leave that place on 4th August 1922. But Razu cancelled his trip to Nepal; instead returned to Gudem Ageney to implement his own plan of action conceived earlier viz. to raise people for his revolt against British Raj

Rebelliousness, courage and imagination made Razu conceive a plan of action to enlarge his sphare of influence by widening his area of operation and activities among the tribal folks of the hilly areas of the Agency tracts in the Rampa sub-division. These tracts were separated from the plains and formed into a separate district and it came into existence in Novemer 20, 1920. Consisting of the inaccessible, infectious, disease-prone portion of the hilly and forest acts of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam and Godhavari districts. the area was called Rampa sub-division of the Agency Tracts and notified by the Government of Madras as backward. This area declared as Agency tract was placed under the personal authority of the Collector. Both the civil and criminal jurisdiction of law were vested in the Collector. The ordinary law as it existed in the plains did not operate in the Agency Tract of Rampa

region. The atrocities committed by the British administration, the forest officials and the police and the inhuman treatment meted out to the tribal folks in that region led Sri Rama Razu organise these exploited people of the Rampa subdivision into armed rebellion against the British.

The Rampa had been the scene of many peasant revolt in the past. There had been continued conflict between the hill tribes and the authority in the Rampa region in the Agency Tract. The very heart of this region—Rampa Chodavaram was the "Centre of endemic revolts for more than one hundred years." This region and the surrounding area witnessed innumerable outbreaks and revolts in the past. There were revolts in 1840, 1845, 1852 and 1862. The year 1862 witnessed the Koya tribal revolt against Muttadars and the British authorities. In the year 1879 that region was the scene of a major agrarian revolt against the rack-renting of Zamindras and the worst form of Feudal oppression. There had been in the year 1921 another outbreak when the people launched a social boycot of all government officials along with a no-tax campaign to protest the restriction on the use of forest land for the purpose of grazing cattle and for the collection of fuel and other forest products in that unprecedented draught year. The Congress leaders like Konda Venkatappaya wished to avert a major agrarian revolt in that year and wanted the agitation of the poor peasants and tribals to be restricted to social boycot of corrupt forest officials. All the outbreaks were put down by means of repressive measures ; throughout the British authorities never cared to go deeper to find out the root causes for these revolts and outbreaks.

The tribals were subjected to untold misery in these parts. Unlike the non-tribals, the tribals do not belong to the mainstream of Indian social life. Their customs, culture, internal organisation of community life and methods of cultivation are different and exclusive. As in every other part of the country, where tribals live, the tribals in the hilly region of the Agency Tracts too suffered common set of grievances against the plains men who came as money-lenders, tradesmen, landlords and forest officials to disrupt their economic and social life. The genuine discontent of this simple-minded folks had been against various forms of exploiatation, injustice and the high handedness of the officers and landlords and the money-lenders from the plains. The Koyas especially were the victims of money-lenders and traders from the plains. The formation of the separate agency district of the Agency Tracts of Vizagapatnam and other adjoining districts enraged the tribal people who saw that the plains were developed unlike their hilly region. The tribals had bitter experience of the policy of exploitation, pursued by the British officials who extracted forced labour from them and underpaid them.

'Podu' (shifting) form of cultivation is the common feature in this

area on which the tribals depended for their living. 'Podu' cultivation was the only source of livelihood for these folks. The tribal folks were not ignorant of normal method of cultivation. Except 'Podu' the alternate method would mean ploughs, other tools and agricultural cattle which would mean money for which the poor tribal peasant must look to money-lender from the plains. But tightening the control over the usage of forest and resorting to implementation of stringent forest rules, the colonial Government obstructed the traditional and customary rights of the poor tribals who depended on 'Podu' cultivation and on the forest products. The Koyas resented the imperialist Government's tightening the measures to restrict 'Podu' cultivation and forest clearance which hit them hard. The restriction on the grazing cattle in the forest, cutting timber and collecting fuel and other forest products like fruits and nuts from the 'reserve area' affected the tribes men severely. They were fined heavily for grazing the animals in the forest lawns. Even for slight forest offence, heavy fines were imposed and the forest laws were mercilessly enforced. These laws were made particularly irksome by corrupt officials like Tehsildar of Gudam called Sabastian.

The Government's highly oppressive land Tenure (Muttadari) system had been another major obstacle to any kind of amelioration in the condition of the Koya tribes. Over and above the exploitation by the money-lenders, the indebtness of the tribes to these money-lenders and traders from plains and new Akbari regulation, came the Government's latest demand for free labour from the tribals folks especially women for ghat road building which provoked these poor people and became the proverbial last straw. When ruthless Tehsildar Sabastian and his oversear Sankaran Pillai—the two Government Officials in-charge of Government's road-building scheme—demanded free labour; the Koya folks resisted. Brute force was unleashed on these people. Their homesteads and cattle were attacked. The flow of food stuff from outside was disrupted. This was the immediate spark that was to set the rebellion off.

In this manner, the Imperialist Government was utterly insensitive to the special needs of the tribal population and their miserable conditions. Nor they cared to pay any attention to the economic and social contents of their revolt.

Already in a state of discontent and tension, the immediate blast of wind to a fire ignited long before and which was well its way to an open rebellion was thus the issue of forced labour for doing the road work. The poor and suffering tribals compelled by their own plight under the British authorities and their Indian henchmen, turned to the leadership of Sri Rama Razu to escape from the ruthlessness and policy of repression and exploitation by officials like Sabastian pursued.

The miserable state of affairs of the tribes in the Agency Tracts moved Sri Rama Razu who had been going from village to village to

preach non-co-operation. He saw the mounting grievances of the people and the unlimited arrogance of the British authority; he also found that the inhuman and harsh policy of the subordinate revenue officials was reaching a breaking point. These petty officials harassed the tribal folks and forced them for free labour for road-building work. Unjust forest regulations by means of which the colonial Government tightened their control over the forest areas to monopolise the forest wealth and denied the poor tribals of their claim for forest products. This rendered the situation pretty tense. This turned the tribal population of the area thoroughly anti-British. Alluri Sri Rama Razu had been a non-co-operator, wore Khadi and was fascinated by Gandhiji's message of non-violence and non-co-operation with the British. He imbibed in a big way his programme of removal of untouchability and anti-drink and work for the uplift of the rural poor. To the Koyas, Razu became the hero.

When Gandhiji abruptly suspended the non-co-operation movement in February 1922, following Chouri-Choura incident it brought a lot of disappointment to Sri Rama Razu as it did to many north Indian Revolutionaries like Chandrasekar Azad, Bhagat Singh, B.K. Dutt, Bhagavati Charan Vora, Prof. Yashpal and others. Gandhiji's non-violent Satyagraha as a major mass movement against British Imperialism and his slogan of Swaraj within one year fascinated him and other revolutionaries. Razu was even arrested once for his activities which resembled non-co-operation movement and was subsequently released without trial. To Razu's mind simmering with hatred towards the imperialists, wanted to act. Razu admired Gandhiji, but felt that action was necessary to eradicate the evil of imperialism in India. Hence he directed all his efforts to organise the tribal patriots to overthrow the British and liberate the suffering hill tribes from the shackles of Imperialism by means of an armed rebellion and "establish a kingdom in the agency area." Razu had already been to Chittagong in 1921 to attend the secret meeting of the revolutionaries who were evolving their own strategy to overthrow the British Raj in India.

Razu's preparation and organisation of the tribal patriots for a major armed political struggle against the British regime within Rampa sub-division of the Agency Tracts was known as the RAMPA REBELLION. The revolting elements were the Koya hill tribes.

The Revolt of 1922-24 known as Rampa Rebellion was different from the previous revolts of the tribal folks in the very region, for it was inspired and led by an outsider a Kshatriya Saint, politically motivated and a non-tribal, hailing from the plains and who came under the spell of non-co-operation movement for a while. What was more fascinating was that Alluri Sri Rama Razu was no local man; nor a local village muttadari, unlike previous leaders; he was a man without family interest, a Sanyasi, he was an outsider from Krishna—a plain's man and a

Kshatriya. Alluri Sri Rama Razu won the confidence of the tribal population of the Rampa Regions. The Official report of the British Government observes :

"Razu had the courage as well as influence to work up this combustible material and start the Fituri as his contribution to the overthrow of the British Government."

Another Official report of the Government of Madras on the Rebellion said, "that Razu had started the Rebellion to capture the entire Presidency of Madras and aspired to become its ruler and openly announced his intention to defeat the Government by declaring a war.

One Demi-Official letter issued from Fort St. George, Madras observed that "Razu had started the Fituri to get guns and ammunition for non-co-operators in Northern India and he (Razu) had intentions to make his way to Central Provinces when he secured sufficient quantity of arms and ammunition to attack the British."

The method that Razu adopted in organising the Revolt of the Rampa tribal patriots against the Imperialist rulers was novel, unlike the revolutionary movements, and the armed revolts and insurrection that we know off in history.

Alluri Sita Rama Razu raised his standard of revolt on August 22, 1922. He exhorted his close friends to join him in his revolt against the British as part of the anti-imperialist struggle. In a letter to his friend, Razu says that "He had started the battle since it was inevitable and necessary in the interest of the country's safety. Appealing to him to join him in the struggle, Razu further said that "birth was surely attended with death."

The rebellion broke out under the leadership of Alluri Sri Rama Razu in the Agency Division on August 22, 1922, was initially a series of attacks on police stations by the rebels, who carried away the police arms and ammunition; and several police officers were attacked and killed, especially the white men. What was originally initiated as skilfully planned and executed series of attacks on police stations by Razu, came to acquire a very massive dimension, involving the tribal population in its entirty and finally developed into a well direct guerilla warfare under the able leadership of this great rebel Sita Rama Razu. His amazing skill in guerrilla tactics and organising ability were responsible for the success of the movement.

The first serious act of the rebels which signalled this rebellion was the attack on Chintapalli Police Station on the afternoon of August 22, 1922. The Sub-Inspector was absent and only three police constables were present at the time. They were over-powered by the rebels who were armed with country guns, swords, speares, bows and arrows, and whose strength was probably under thirty (though the constables made their superiors believe that their number was three hundreds). They

took away 11 muskets, 5 swords and 1390 cartridges after breaking open the magazine.

Having sent advance warning to the police station at Krishnadevi Pettah located at twenty miles distance from Chintapalli, the rebel leader Sri Rama Razu and his followers surrounded the station. The police helplessly surrendered all their ammunition and other fire arms.

In Rajavommungi, situated sixteen miles away from Krishnadevi Pettah, the police offered some resistance and fired thirty-two rounds without any effect, when the rebel party arrived at the police station. But Razu's force overpowered the police. They also fired shots to create panic, but caused injury to no policeman. Razu released Veerayya Dora, the ex-Muttadar of Gudem, who was confined in the station having been convicted that evening by the sub-Magistrate of Addatigala for escaping back from the Agency Karrant.

The rebels eventually took away large quantity of fire arms and ammunition and some police uniforms and other articles belonging to the policemen. The strength of the rebels here according to the official report, was probably not more than a hundred, though the police as in the previous instances exaggerated their number of four hundred. The rebels reached Gudem on August 28, 1922 (to which place the released prisoner Veeriah Dora belonged) and stopped there for the Desara Pooja. Here ten or twelve more joined the gang as fresh recruits, according to the report of the village Munsiff.

The successful raids and attacks on police stations and crushing defeat suffered by the Government forces in Razu's hands attracted to his camp, the two powerful leading tribal men of Gudem known as Gam Brothers—Gam Mallu Dora and Gam Guntam Dora who had serious grievances against their Tahsil Officials, particularly against the forest reservation policy of the British Government, had joined Sri Rama Razu. These two became Razu's trusted lieutenants in the Rampa Rebellion. Along with them entered several hundreds of tribals. With the assistance and co-operation of these folks Razu organised an excellent intelligence service which enabled him to know in advance, the movement of the police and preclude them successfully.

The Government forces suffered a crushing defeat in the hands of Razu and his rebels at Onjeri Ghats. On the evening of September 3, 1922 at Onjeri Ghats, they attacked the Assistant Commissioner Tramenhere, Deputy Tahsildar Bastian and party comprising one Jamedhar, two Head Constables and twenty-eight constables of Parvatipur Reserves who pursued them. The rebels opened fire which was returned by the police, who, however had to retreat as ammunition was exhausted. A police constable was killed by the rebels who took away his sword and also annevxd the baggage and belongings of the party. The rebels had no casuality on their side and this was confirmed by the

Government themselves.

After Onjeri for nearly three week there had been not much of importance to mention. The morale of the rebel was riding high. They marched from village to village appealing to the villagers to join them, collecting provisions wherever they went and sometime being harboured by the village munsiffs themselves. The Government found that there were indications that the village munsiffs failed to help police against the rebels. The village munsiff of Singanapalli was prosecuted by the Government for harbouring the rebels in his village on September 21, 1922.

A special police party were to attack him on one occasion but they failed. For Razu's own network of intelligence tipped off about police plan to attack him when he was engaged in Kali puja. Razu managed to escape unhurt. The rebel followers attributed this escape of their leader to divine power and that he was bullet-proof and enemy would never be able to attack him. Razu had many such hairbreadh escapes in the two years, in all the encounters between his men and British armed police.

In the meantime far more severe and crushing defeat awaited the Government forces in the hands of Razu and his rebel followers at Damanapalli Ghats. The Police planned to kill rebel leader Razu and liquidate him for good. Scott Coward and Hayter, the two Assistant Commissioners, hatched a plot. The rebel party headed by Razu received prior intimation, from the brother of village munsiff, of the approach of a police party headed by Scott Coward and Hayter. On the receipt of intelligence of impending police attack, rebel leader Razu and his rebel followers struck from the higher site and ambushed the police party and shot dead the two commanding police officers, and four others as they were descending the four miles long Ghat road. The rebels and the police were again engaged in a severe battle at the foot of the hill. Here again the police force was vanquished. At the foot of the hill, Armitage, the Inspector-General of Police with a small force hastened to the spot. He attempted to go up the hill to fetch the wounded and bodies of the dead, was foiled by the rebels who fired on from the jungle and Inspector-General had to desist from the attempt after getting one constable killed.

The Officers in-charge of Chintapalli reported that between September 29 and 30, thirteen of the Fituridars looted the villages of Turamamdi and Lakha-Varapipetah between Gudem and Pedavalasa. The situation was so tense and beyond control that Inspector-General of Police impressed upon the Agency Commissioner to have Martial Law proclaimed throughout the affected area.

To Sri Rama Razu, the life of every fellow Indian was sacred. In the course of his struggle against the British Raj in the Rampa Rebellion, Razu took as far as possible great pains to see that no Indian official

was hurt or killed. He managed this way till December 1922. Moreover Razu discouraged violence except for self-defence.

During his campaign Razu would summon the police and revenue officials to his camp. The Rebel leader had once expressed sorrow to the Tahsildar of Chodavaram for he (Razu) was unable to shoot Europeans, as they were always surrounded by the Indians whom he did not want to kill. Instructions to his followers were "to kill all white men and procure arms and ammunitions". This was evidenced by the events at Damanapalli ambush of September 24, 1922.

The rebels always allowed the advance party of Indians pass and then they shot down the two British Police Officers. It was significant that the advance guard of the police party was allowed to pass unmolested. Commenting on the Government inefficiency and the police incapability to meet the challenge the, Commissioner of Agency Operation observed :

"It is by now quite evident that Razu's Intelligence Department is most efficient. Razu gets news of movement of our police force immediately . . . the lot of information we receive is actually sent in by him (Razu) to mislead us. His military dispositions preclude any chance of surprises. His favourite position is below a Ghat with strong part holding the Ghat in ambush; his camps are always carefully picketed even situated in the most inaccessible places . . . ."

The difficulty with the Government was their ineffective and inefficient intelligence system unlike that of Rama Razu's intelligence service. Mobile and swift moving, the rebels managed to evade their opponents very skilfully. Added to that, was the tremendous popular support, Razu and his rebel followers enjoyed from the common people of that area.

The police and the Government authority found the rebels in greater strength, well—organised, with plenty of firearms. They never rested in one party—Razu had selected his camp with great 'cunning' on the top of the most inaccessible hill at the head of the Padavalasa Ghats. The rebels always put out one or two ambushes on the tracks from where they expected attack from Police. The Government of Madras realised that the range of rebel operation and their strategy made it quite clear that the campaign would be much more difficult. "The present striking force would be inadequate and that Malabar Special Force is required." "Razu would otherwise have no difficulty in giving them (Government) the slip." After much loss and death of two of their top police officials of efficiency and ability, the Government of Madras realised the futility of employing ordinary police force to curb the Rebellion headed by Razu. The Inspector-General of Police, Armitage observed :

"It is clear that the rebels are too dangerous to be dealt with by police and that soldiers experienced in jungle warfare are required. I much regret that I did not realise this sooner and issued orders which

would have prevented any part exposing itself to such danger and thereby have prevented the loss of these two valuable lives."

"It is a matter of great regret to all Police Officers that the police efforts to destroy the gang have so far failed. Officers and men have worked most strenuously and the leading by the British officers has been splendid. The men however are not competent or trained to attack the rebels when concealed in the jungle and our organisation does not provide for the Indian Commissioned and Non-Commissioned Officers which form part of the Organisation of an Indian Battalion."

The above passage reflects the anxious state of mind and tension on the part of the High Police Officials during Rampa Rebellion in September 1922. It was becoming extraordinarily difficult for the Government to get information from the people in the small scattered jungle villages. Even police admitted that most of the villagers were in sympathy with rebel leader and his men. Only a small fraction denied knowledge of anything since they were afraid of reprisals if they gave information. This hide and seek game in which the rebels concealed themselves in the jungle during day time, and move by night commandeering supplied from a village when necessary, appeared to have continued uptil December 1922 when they were to meet with reverses.

The Muttadars and village Munsiffs backed out in giving information. Then the relatives of the local rebels were tried for some information. Even that proved futile.

The Government of Madras issued a severe warning through proclamation to the village Munsiffs, Muttadars and others that if they failed to do their duty and the Futuridars are not handed over to the Government, consquences would be severe.

The Government found that there were indications that the village Munsiffs failed to help police against the rebels and actually assisted the rebels and misled the police patrol.

The Government of Madras had become helpless in September 1922. They were confused since no definite contact had been established at any point with the rebel gang; nor could they succeed in their efforts to get a true account of the facts from any of the police concerned, Everyone gave his own version of the situation and several rumours were afloat. The authorities hoped that a true picture could be available only when Razu was caught. The Agency Commissioner equally helpless, urged the Government of Madras to apply for a bush-fighting regiment, realising the difficulty in apprehending the rebels in the hill and forest nature of the Ageney Tract. Even the Police Superintendent Saunders admitted the failure on the part of the police to capture the rebels due to repidity of the later's movement in the hilly tracts.

On 25th September 1922, the District Magistrate of Vizag called out 30 men of the East Coast Battalion who were directed to proceed

to Narasapatnom. On the same day, the Government of Madras forwarded the request of the Inspector-General of Police for the military assistance with a request to spare an Indian Army Unit trained in Jungle-fighting. The Government found it quite useless to march after the rebels armlessly for they were not in a position to corner the rebels and drive them in a direction.

The seriousness of the situation was sensed by the Government of Madras. At this juncture the Government immediately summoned a contingent of Malabar Special Police to deal with Sri Rama Razu's activities. Even then the Government could not quell the rebellion or crush Razu's movement. Razu eluded the Malabar Special Police force also successfully. His raids on police stations continued unchecked and success attended on Razu. The series of attacks conducted by Razu gave no rest to the Government of Madras till November 1922. The police raids included Nadimpalam, Rampa Chodavaram, Makaram, Rampolu, Addatigala, Chaperthipalem, Anantasagaram and Velagapalem and several other places. The events moved very fast and almost entirely the way the rebels wanted them to move till November 1922.

At Rampa Chodavaram, the rebels ransacked the police station. Razu was received by the people with Aarthi and was accorded a royal reception. Sixty Futuridars visited the Tahsildar's office at Chodavaram at 4 P.M. on October 19. Razu sent for the Tahsildar of Rampa Chodavaram and talked to him on political matter and state, "Fituri would continue for two years more and there would be bloodshed." The rebels under Razu's leadership visited several villages and disrupted the communication and cut telephone wire in several places and caused damage to the Government side. The activities of the rebel force could not be contained. The rebels were victorious in several encounters to the dismay of the Government. After their activities during the day time, the rebels amused themselves by attending drama in the night.

Even after the arrival of the Malabar Special police its impact was not felt in the rebel affected area. The Police Superintendent and District Magistrate of Godavari had to admit with objectivity that Razu's information and communication system was good. Reporting on the situation in the Agency Tract to the Madras Government in October 1922, the District Magistrate of Godavari observed in his confidential report:

"Ths situation there remains serious. The rebel leader grows in prestige and the non-co-operators without doubt sympathise with him. Looting of additional and Chodavaram have told on our prestige. I consider the present Special Malabar Force is quite insufficient to catch the rebels in a reasonable time except by an accident. . . .Razu's information is good, his military dispositions unexpectedly good. It is almost impossible to surprise him; he cannot match any force that starts

in pursuit easily. Another point is ordinary reserve police are almost useless. My experience of the past three days convinces me that our forces would throw down their arms and bolt into the jungle at the first serious attack. . . .Their discipline is thoroughly bad and their morale equally so. In offensive operations they are useless from a military point of view. . . .there is no hope of catching the rebels quickly unless there are four or five movable columns of at least 50 men operating at the same time in the same area."

In the height of Sri Rama Razu's growing popularity and invincibility, his men suffered the first serious defeat at the hands of the police on December 6, 1922 at Peddagudapalam. Where four of rebel men were killed and one captured by the Special Armed Police. According to one source Razu himself was hurt. This was followed by another set-back on the same evening at a place called Lingapuram, not very far away from the scene of morning's encounter. In the action that followed, eight rebel followers were killed and four were captured by the police. The police recovered from the rebel troops lot of ammunition stocks, arms, catridge, rifles, boynets, bows and arrows including the automatic pistol of the ASP, killed by the rebels in Damanapalli ambush in September 1922. The reverses did demoralise the rebel force to some extent, while Razu's influence remained undiminished. Following the set-back that his movement faced, Razu, with a programme to go slow, had suspended the campaign for a while and retired into the interior of the forest. In the absence of any information regarding the rebel movement, except the news of occasional raids, or attacks, the Madras Government believed that they had broken the back of the rebellion and demoralised the rebels. This made the authorities that the rebels wanted to form the fresh gang again.

There was no news of Razu or his rebel force except that of an occasional or stray raid by his group in the far off villages. The Government of Madras in the meantime began to evolve a long range strategy for a combing operation to capture the rebels scattered all over the country. Razu with his force moved to the inaccessible parts of the country between Peddavalasa, Gudem, Dharakonda, Gurtedu, Mattam and Bhimavaram. Attempts to separate from Razu, Yenthu Padal, one of the important and influential rebels also proved futile. None of Razu's followers was prepared to betray him, despite the Government's enticement. The personal loyalty of the tribals to Raju had been intense. He became their undisputed leader in this agitation. The tribals could hardly understand seizure of power, but could identify themselves with a leader, widely known and respected in their areas and who espoused their cause, strict secrecy was observed with regard to Razu's movement. The police tried to supply to the rebels through agents, large quantities of intoxicant-country liquor to make the rebels drink in

order to spoil their reputation and tarnish their image among the villagers and make them lose the villagers' support which sustained their movement so long. Here again it proved a failure. Occasional report of a raid here and the looting of a village there reached the police. In a night's operation against the rebel activities most difficult one on February 16, 1923 the police captured four of them but could not succeed further.

The District Collector of Godavari had already taken a decision to prosecute those who supported Razu and his movement. They launched a series of prosecutions on several village leaders, village munsiffs and some suspected persons for harbouring Sri Rama Razu and suppressing information on rebel movements. The villagers and village munsiffs and local leaders were threatened with prosecution for failure to report the passage of Fituridars through their villages while quite a few were proceeded against. The authorities had also emptiedthe police stations of firearms and ammunition as precautionary measure to evert rebel plans.

With hardly any report of the rebel movement forthcoming the Government authorities gained the impression that the rebelion had practically come to an end. They believed that Razu's men had deserted him and that there was no likelihood of their rejoinnng him or of his getting fresh recruits.

In view of the heavy expenditure it entailed, the Government decided to send back major part of the Malabar Special Police Force, the wireless installation, tract detection equipment and all the mule transport, medical staff, transport, intelligence and reduce the supply, since their was no justification for such heavy expenditure. The authorities stationed punitive police force of 300 strong in that area and the cost to maintain them to be recoverd from the local inhabitants themselves to make them realise their responsibilities and force them to render active assistance in securing information regarding rebel movement which would enable the Government to capture the small force moving along here and there. While such steps were being executed sunddenly there was the news of Razu' s men looting of place called Anatgiri.

Razu did anticipate that the Government might send back the Malabar Special Police Force and there might be slackening of efforts on Government side. After a brief spell of suspension, Razu renewed his campaign of attacks on police stations. The withdrawal however of Malabar Police and wireless sets further encouraged Razu and his rebel followers to come out of their hideouts in the forest to resume their activities. The news of Sri Rama Razu, being active again, had reached the Government. Under a new Commissioner, three separate parties of police had been put on the job who were in constant pursuit of Razu and the other rebels.

It was hard for the police to obtain correct and timely information regarding rebel activities of Razu's where-abouts and movement. The Government was worried about the absence of information regarding rebel activities. The rebels were hiding in the jungle. There was little or no report about rebel activities. The efforts of the police had not met with as much success as was expected.

From time to time, the Government and the police miscalculated and under-estimated Razu's strength and popularity and often concluded that Razu had become unpopular and that his followers had deserted him. Again the Government had a mistaken belief that Razu had influence in Gudem hills and not below the Ghats which was proved wrong. Village after village was for Razu and stood solidly by him. The incident at Annavaram was to prove beyond doubt Razu's extent of popularity with the masses.

From now onwards, Razu's campaign entered a new stage. Razu made his sudden appearance at Annavaram station on April 18, 1923 and attacked the police station. But he had to face an emptied Police Station wherever he went and could get no arms or ammunition, since they had already been emptied. The Government had planned the emptying of police station as an anticipatory measure. But Razu was accorded reception in that place. The Postmaster, the Deputy Tahsildar and the Sub-Inspector of Police took Razu to their houses. The woman folk washed his feet as he was a sanyasi and sprinkled that water on their hands and similar things happened during his visit to the temple. Razu and his rebel followers proceeded to Sankavaram where the similar situation confronted them viz. emptied police station and no fire arms. The people of Sankavaram also gave Razu rousing reception. The authorities realising that the open welcome to the rebel leader and his men in villages was indicative of the extent of their continued popularity among the villagers, grew nervous. "They imposed at once collective fine of Rs. 4,000 on both the villages, for the reception they accorded to Razu. The Deputy Superintendent of Police of Godavari observed that Razu's popularity and influence were as great as it had ever been." The rebel followers travelled from village to village to collect supplies. Nothing was heard of the rebels next three weeks. Then on 31st May, Razu's men visited Koyyus under the leadership of Gam Gantam Dora and captured the Sub-Inspector on intelligence duty and Deputy Tahsildar in charge of punitive tax collection and subsequently released them. Razu's main problem was to secure arms and ammunition from the police stations. He visited Kondakamberu and Malkanagiri, but failed to get any fire arms. At Mathanagiri, the Deputy Tahsildar was summoned to whom Razu described himself as "bullet proof". On June 21, Razu's men carried off the Munsiff and his son for spying for the Government. Several places were visited by

the rebel leader and his followers commandering supplies and rice. At Ramavaram on September 2, police party which attempted to attack Razu failed miserably and were compelled to retreat. "The Government admitted that their forces had to retreat like Nepoleon from Moscow."

Number of village Munsiffs were not reporting the arrival of the rebels in their villages and deliberately withheld information from the Government. Commenting on the situation the Government sources stated:

"No report of the rebels movement have been received, though they must have passed through numerous villages, on their long march from Kirubu to Gudem and must also have obtained supplies. The position is becoming ridiculous and I can suggest no means by which village munsiff and villagers can be made to realise the responsibilities. It is practically impossible to obtain evidence for agency warrant."

The police patrol which kept track of Razu's movement were deliberately misled by the village munsiffs and local villagers with regard to the movement of the rebels. False information was given to the police. Attacks by the police which could have proved fatal to the rebel leaders and his men were averted by the timely assistance and co-operation of the village folks. Some of the village Munsiffs and Muttadars who withheld information on the rebels and harboured them were severely punished with conviction.

The Government found that Razu had come to an understanding with the Muttadars and village Munsiffs in the matter of the latter sending the reports to the Government. It was even mentioned that Razu dictated the reports to police on his activities. When the Government found that there were indication that the village Munsiffs failed to help the Police, the former quartered police detachment in the locality concerned and tried to recover the cost of maintaining them from the villagers themselves inform of punitive tax. Muttadar and others were suspended. Meanwhile the punitive tax which was sanctioned for six months from the end of March 1923 was discontinued after reviewing its working. The launching of prosecution against village Munsiffs and rebels, and the stationing of punitive police force had no effect on the people of that area who readily offered their assistance to Razu and his rebel followers. The escape therefore had become quite easy for them. Erection of telephone connections involving huge cost were sanctioned to link Narasapatnam, with Krishna Devi Pettah and Rajavomongi for establishing regular communication channel to meet the emergency situation caused by Sri Rama Razu's rebel movement. But Razu's followers had smashed the telephone connections in these places overnight and disrupted them, once again rendering impossible all official communication regarding the rebel movement.

The Government report lamented :

"Nothing but the treachery of the Village Munsiffs got the rebels out of tight corner."

Razu had to face a very serious situation since arms supply had dwindled and police stations were all pre-emptied by the Government. Razu's attack on police stations also hardly yielded any results. In the absence of the sufficient supply of fire arms and ammunition on the police and military.

In the height of his campaign, a great misfortune be fell Razu, when his able lieutenant Gam Mallu Dora was captured by the police at Nadimpalam on September 18. This was the most important event for the police. Gam Mallu Dora was considered the most dangerous and desperate of the Futuridars. The capture of Razu's lieutenant and the Fituri leader was claimed as great success by the Government for their side. Gam Mallu Dora was discovered hiding in a grain basket in the attic of a small house in Nadimpalam. Despite this setback and misfortunes, Razu continued his attacks unabated in far-off and interior villages—places, they had never been before.

Razu was severely handicapped for want of arms and ammunition. With a desire to procure adequate supply of fire arms and raids on police stations yielding nothing, Razu planned an attack on the Gudem Military Camp on October 26. A part of the Rebel group made a regular attack on the police post. The entire village participated in it. But the stiff resistance put by the police forced Razu to retreat with one of his followers killed and several wounded. After this event, till the end of 1923, Razu's rebel forces were mostly dodging the police patrol.

Towards the end of 1923, in December, rumours were to the effect that Razu might attend the National Congress Session at Cocanda, and that he was attending the Congress session in the guise of a volunteer in the Punjab delegates camp in order not to be identified by the police. It could not be verified. Razu's impending attack an the Rajamundry Jail to release the political prisoners confined there was also in the air. The Government took precaution to guard the jail from attack.

The alarming situation created by Alluri's activities necessitated drastic action by the Government of Madras. The Government found it impossible to quell the rebellion or capture Alluri Sri Rama Razu with the then existing forces in the Agency. They were inadequate and proved unequal to the task of suppressing the rebellion. "The rebel forces were hardly hundred but they had super numeraries all over the disturbed areas who joined whenever it was in their locality."

Hence early in 1924 the Government brought the military in the form of Assam Rifles to somehow break the rebellion. They requisitioned the services of the two double companies of the Assam Rifles from the Government of Assam which arrived in Narasapatnam on January 27, 1924, and immediately took up their position in the rebel areas.

The rebels continued their campaign and attacks throughout the month of January, February and March visiting village after village for procuring supplies and they moved to the neighbouring Padua taluk in Jeypore district of modern Orissa state. The confidential report of the Madras Government till March 1924 admitted the Government's failure to apprehend the rebel leader Razu and his force. The rebels enjoyed public support and aid ; village Munsiffs and villagers assisted the rebels, supplied them food and provision, refrained from giving information in the police. Individuals like Muttadar acted as spy on the police camps and reported police movement to the rebels.

The Government of Madras repeatedly pleaded in April and June 1924, with Delhi for special ordinance to deal with what was virtually the rebel population and for effective and rapid punishment of rebel sympathisers. They also pleaded with the Government of India in October 1922 for idemnity in advance for every police man fighting the rebellion in the agency area.

Sri Rama Razu's movement posed a severe challenge to the Government of Madras. In April 1924, the Government of Madras took special measures to meet the challenge posed by Razu's resistance. The Government appointed one of their ablest civilians, Rutherford I.C.S. as the Special Commissioner in charge of the Agency Operation. The special Commissioner resorted to ruthless and inhuman tactics to suppress the rebellion and finish Razu. The Commissioner realised that the prime difficulty in bringing the rebels under control lay in the assistance and support that the villagers afforded the rebels and their withholding information regarding the rebel movement. The number of village Munsiffs were not reporting the arrival of the rebels in the villages. They deliberately suppressed information, and gave nil report to the authority. While few might have done so out of fear but bulk of them were with Razu. Even on occasions when the rebel force of Razu were in imminent danger of being captured by the police patrols, the former managed to escape. When Razu's men went in one direction, village Munsiffs intentionally led the police in the opposite directions. The presence of the Assam Rifle did not alter the situation even slightly. The total failure of the local leaders in the last several months, (most of whom were solidly behind Razu and his men) to report the rebel movement to the authority led to the collapse of the system and prevented the capture of the leader and his man. Rutherford, to overcome this difficulty, adopted stringent measures. With the receipt by Rutherford, the information of Razu's movement in the neighbouring Jeypore District, he altered his force on all sides. He issued agency warrants against such persons who were found guilty of having withheld information or suppressed the same. Fifty-five individuals whose deportation (removal from the scene of rebellion) the Special Commissioner, considered very vital, were ordered to

be sent out of the Government. Against 182 persons who were said to be relatives of the rebels, agency warrants were at once issued. Later on they were punished with jail sentence. This according to the Government sources is said to have altered the situation slightly. But the rebels continued their resistance led by undaunted and undeterred Razu, against all odds and increasing difficulties.

The luckiest day dawned for the Government of Madras on May 6. In their intensive search for the Fituri leader, a party of Malabar police under Upendra Parnaik came upon a rebel force of fifty strong on May 6, 1924. It was quite unexpected. The rebels fired at the police and wounded a constable seriously. They returned the fire. After pursuing the rebels over considerable distance, in the encounter that followed at Ravellu, two rebel men were killed by the Special Police and several were wounded and the close assosiate of Sri Rama Ruzu, identified as Aggi Razu (Pericherla Suryanaryana Razu) was captured while Alluri managed to escape from the spot. Soon after the encounter several groups of special police force undertook the combing operation to capture the leader Alluri and rest of the rebels.

The rebel morale was low. They were surrounded by the Government force and Special Police on all sides, cut off from communication with starvation facing them, with all domesticated animals having been practically killed by the police, despite their continued brave stand, the rebels conceded that their end was near. Razu's capture by the police was becoming inevitable since the Government forces had by their ruthless tactics brought the situation under control. There had already been few reverses which had told on rebel morals.

Then came what the rebels would call the blackest day May 7, 1924. It proved to be the fatal day for heroic Razu. On the morning of May 7, the intelligence patrol of the East Coast special police under Jamedhar Kunju Menon observed accidentally a fair complexioned bearded person at distance. Suspecting him to be Alluri Sri Rama Razu, the police proceeded towards him, almost chasing him and fired at him. The rebel leader Razu fell on the ground and was thus rendered immobile. The captured rebel leader admitted that he was Sri Rama Razu, the man who never allowed the police and the Government to rest for the past two years; Razu was brought to Koyyur and was shot dead.

There are different versions and very conflicting accounts of the circumstances leading to Razu's death. The Government sources declared that Razu, as a captive, was given sufficient liberty of movement, to ease himself, but made a futile attempt to escape and was shot down and killed. This appeared to be the usual police story on occasions whenever they plan to liquidate the revolutionary political leaders. Razu's dead body was identified by the Special Commissioner and was finally sent to the Krishna Devi Pettah where after further identification, was cremated

on the morning of the May 9, 1924.

The eventful career that was a constant source of threat to the British Raj—for the past two years, thus came to an abrupt end. With their leader unceremoniously shot dead in an accidental encounter, the Fituri was continued for few weeks by Razu's faithful followers like Gantam Dora. Several of the rebel followers of Razu were captured and ruthlessly dealt with by the authorities. In the rebel leader Sita Rama Razu's puja box recovered from one of the captured rebels, police found the complete list of the rebel activists with detailed particulars concerning them. This rendered the task easy for the Government. On May 26, Yendu Padal was captured and killed. Exactly after a month of Razu's death, on June 7, Gantam Dora was also captured and in the encounter that followed, he too was shot dead. His wife and children were exterminated.

The movement initiated by Razu was thus continued after death by his faithful followers for a few more weeks. By September 1924 the authorities boastfully claimed to have crushed the entire agency rebellion.

It is said that the Congress leaders of Sri Rama Razu's time hardly displayed any sympathy or support for the former or for his movement. The praise/glorification for Razu's patriotic fervour and his noble sacrifice for the cause of the motherland, was generally absent as the resistance was not within Gandhian frame, since tendency for political violence wa already on the decline.

Soon after Razu's abrupt end in police hands on May 7, there weres wide comments from the newspapers of that times. There was public appreciation for Razu's courage, sacrifice and his death defying heroism and patriotic fervour in challenging the British Imperialism. Since the country was well on the path of Gandhiji's non-violent method, violence and armed insurrection failed to evoke public sympathy for Razu's struggle, though Razu's heroism and patriotic fervour became quite a legend. But Alluri Sri Rama Razu had on no occasion indulged in violence on his own. From his side, he was not known to have used a weapon even for his self-defence.

The Rampa Rebellion and the great patriot Alluri Sri Rama Razu receive only passing reference in an Official Congress History.

In the Conference of the Godavari district Congress Committee held on July 20, 1924 the resolution placing on record Razu's services, was out of the agenda, since there appeared a version that the rebel leader Alluri Sri Rama Razu had been sent to Andaman and not shot dead.

The facts narrated in this paper are based on the archival records. The Rampa episode occurred soon after the suspension of non-co-operation movement by Gandhiji following the Chauri-Chaura incident in 1922.

Except for what the rebels could secure by raiding few police stations, the revolt in the Rampa region had been an unequal fight between the bows and bullet. It was two-year old continued struggle that raged between simple Koya tribes who had become anti-British and the well organised and powerfully armed state forces.

What did the Rebellion achieve?

The Government was able to know the plight of the poor tribal population at huge cost and after causing death and destruction to the latter. The lesson learnt by the foreign rulers resulted in the grant of special treatment to the Agency people for development to compensate for their past neglect leading to special tribal legislation and welfare.

Prof. Venkatarangiah characterising the Rampa Revolt as a political struggle under Razu's leadership against the might of the British bureaucracy observes :

"It was his (Razu's) leadership that gave to the rebellion, a character which distinguished it from the Fituri which had taken place in the agency on previous occasions. His was definitely a political movement inspired by the ideal of Swaraj which became widespread in the country by 1921. His aim was to overthrow British rule in the Agency to start with, establish a Kingdom of his own there and make it a nucleus for freeing the rest of the country from the alien rule. All this might appear to be a fantastic dream but it was such a dream that inspired him."

Alluri Sri Rama Razu was one of the impeccable enemies of the Biritish power in India. His determined opposition to British rule made his extermination a necessity for the Imperialist rulers. For Government found it difficult to prevent the influence of Razu's movement spread to other parts. There was no peace or rest for the Madras Government as long as this profoundly revolutionary character was alive.

Heroes, Martyrs, Revolutionaries and popular leaders have by their courage of conviction, patriotism and sacrifices have encrimsoned the pages of history with blood and soaked with tears reflecting pain, suffering, faith and struggle. Alluri Sri Rama Razu's life and activities, selfless sacrifice and supreme dedication to the cause of the masses, like that of many such heroes, unceasingly inspired the future generations of patriotic youth.